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PRACTICAL SERMONS,

IN TWO VOLUMES:

BY THE LATE

REV. JOSEPH MILNER, A. M.

MASTER OF THE GRAMMAR SCHOOL, AND
AFTERWARDS VICAR OF THE HOLY TRINITY CHURCH
IN KINGSTON-UPON-HULL.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

AN ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND CHARACTER
OF THE AUTHOR,

BY THE

REVD ISAAC MILNER, D.D. F.R.S.

DEAN OF CARLISLE,
AND PRESIDENT OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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LIFE OF THE AUTHOR,

BY THE

REV. ISAAC MILNER, D.D.

It is a common and a just observation, that the characters of deceased persons are often over-valued and adorned with imaginary excellencies, by their surviving friends.—The writer of this short Narrative of Mr. Milner's Life does not pretend to be free from partiality. On the contrary, he feels and acknowledges its force; but, it is his express intention to guard against its influence and operation as much as possible. His principal object is, to instruct, exhort, and admonish, the Living, by calling their attention to the example of the Dead. And if, while he does this, he may be permitted to gratify the affectionate feelings of the inhabitants of a large and populous town where Mr. Milner lived, by recording a few remarkable particulars respecting his life and conduct, he will accomplish his utmost wishes *.

The detail of the particulars he has in view will

* A Life of Mr. Milner, composed by his friend Mr. Stillingfleet, was communicated to the Rev. Dr. Isaac Milner, the writer of this Narrative, with full leave to make whatever use he pleased of it. Every thing Mr. Stillingfleet says in this Life is strictly true; but his unbounded affection for Mr. Milner, leads him, sometimes, to express himself in terms, which will be suspected of partiality. The writer's first intention was to have kept the account, which Mr. Stillingfleet was so kind as to transmit to him, perfectly distinct from his own; but finding that this plan would make a good deal of repetition unavoidable, he relinquished it as inconvenient, and has availed himself of the liberty given him, by freely mixing both accounts, just as it happened to suit. He finds it impossible to express the gratitude which he feels towards that truly affectionate and excellent person.

not, it is hoped, fatigue the reader, or disgust him by their insignificance.

JOSEPH MILNER was born in the neighbourhood of Leeds, on the 2d of January 1744, and was a sound and healthy child, during the first two or three years of his life. The measles seem to have affected his constitution permanently. He recovered from that disorder with great difficulty. His life was in a precarious state for the space of eight or ten years; and though the vigour of his natural stamina checked the progress of his complaints, till he was nearly forty or forty-five years old, there is reason to believe that during all that time he was never THOROUGHLY well in the lungs.

His bodily infirmities, and particularly an early disposition to asthma, rendered him utterly incapable of mixing with his school-fellows in their plays and diversions. While THEY were very properly acquiring strength of constitution, by bodily exercise and feats of activity in the open air,—he was doing the best he could,—amusing himself in the closet with a book, preparing himself for the lessons of his schoolmaster, and exercising his memory in a variety of ways.

The Rev. Mr. Moore, Usher of the Grammar School of Leeds, and afterwards Head-Master of the same, was his classical instructor, from a child, till he went to the University. He was an orthodox divine, and well skilled in the learned languages. Moreover, he excelled in the art of communicating knowledge, and was an admirable discerner of genius and capacity.

The extraordinary talents of Milner could not long escape the observation of a person of this sort;

and accordingly he began to pay particular attention to him before he was nine years of age. This attention was increased, and also became mixed with kindness and concern on account of the extreme bad health of the boy, and the narrow circumstances of his parents. The Schoolmaster soon saw there was no prospect of his scholar's acquiring a comfortable maintenance in any way, except by learning; and there is reason to believe, that he formed a very early resolution of doing his utmost to encourage him, and bring him forward, in case the boy should live. He apprized Milner's parents of their son's great abilities, and of the nature of the case in general; but, did not much explain his own intentions or real hopes at that time. He constantly, however, pressed them to persevere in keeping him at school, and never to think of any thing else for him but some literary employment.

Joseph Milner had no great turn for Arithmetic, or for the Mathematics in general. The strength, both of his parts and of his taste, discovered themselves, at a very early period, in the study of Greek and Latin, and in composition both in prose and verse in his own language. His memory was unparalleled.—The writer of this narrative has heard of prodigies in that way, but never saw HIS equal, among the numerous persons of science and literature with whom he has been acquainted.

His memory retained its strength to the end of his life; for though he himself used to say that it was not so retentive as it had been, nobody else perceived any decay or alteration in that great and useful faculty.—He has often been tried by having a single verse read to him from those parts of the

Old Testament which are less familiar to most persons; and he never failed to point out the place or near it.—And so in profane history. The writer has frequently taken up Grey's MEMORIA TECHNICA, and made experiments upon his Brother's memory, by enquiring after such persons and things as seemed the most remote from common reading, and the event always appeared the more surprising, because Mr. Milner satisfied all enquiries of this kind, without the least assistance from any MEMORIA TECHNICA, by connecting together numerous facts in chronological order, and by tracing in that way the object he had in view, till he had settled in his own mind the time of its existence, within one, two, or perhaps three years. By showing, in the way just mentioned, the absolute impossiblity of a point in dispute, he has often been known to correct the positive and precise assertions of learned men in chronological matters, who had either too much relied on their artificial helps, or perhaps had mistaken the meaning of some memorial mark of great consequence.

Mr. Moore, unfortunately, was very deficient in this faculty, almost indispensably necessary for a Schoolmaster. It was his practice constantly, when he was explaining the Latin or Greek authors, to apply to Milner's memory in cases of History and Mythology. He used to say, "Milner is more easily consulted than the dictionaries or the pantheon, and he is quite as much to be relied on."

It is more than probable, that at about the age of thirteen, there were very few of his years equally skilled in Latin and Greek; and perhaps none, who were to be compared with him in the accurate and extensive knowledge of Ancient History. His love

of the study of History showed itself as soon as ever he could read. His passion for it increased, and continued strong for many years; and it was his favourite amusement and relaxation to the last.—It is no wonder, then, that uncommon excellence should be the effect of such a taste, combined with so retentive a memory.

It was at this age that he began to step out of his obscurity. The learned lad, as he was called, was marked and gazed at as he passed through the villages to his school; and many zealous and flattering prognostications were uttered of his future greatness, by his poor, ignorant neighbours. But his Schoolmaster at the same time secured to him, among the richer people of the town, a better-founded and a more useful reputation. He grew so fond of his feeble, weakly pupil, that he trumpeted his praises every where, introduced his verses into the news-papers, and the author himself often into many of the best families. He told so many and almost incredible stories of his memory, that the Rev. Mr. Murgatroyd, a very respectable Clergyman, at that time minister of St. John's Church in Leeds, expressed some suspicion of exaggeration. Mr. Moore was a man of the strictest veracity, but of a warm temper. He instantly offered to give satisfactory proof of his assertions. "Milner," said he, "shall go to Church next Sunday, and without taking a single note at the time, shall write down your sermon afterward. Will you permit us to compare what he writes with what you preach?" Mr. Murgatroyd, the mildest and best-tempered man in the world, accepted the proposal with pleasure; and has very often been heard to express his asto-

nishment at the event of this trial of memory. "The lad," said he, "has not omitted a single thought or sentiment in the whole sermon: and frequently he has got the very words for a long way together."—This fact was soon blazed abroad; and it established the reputation of Milner beyond controversy, at the same time that it increased both the attachment and the pride of the Schoolmaster, who could boast of so extraordinary a pupil.

Mr. Moore, for some years past, had entertained secret hopes of being able, in due time, to send him to the University, though he had wisely kept these hopes to himself, through the fear of being ultimately disappointed. But the premature and sudden death of Milner's father seemed to blast every expectation of this sort.

Milner's father had been unsuccessful in business; and his circumstances had suffered exceedingly from accidents during the Rebellion of 1745; insomuch that he had very little to spare* from the necessary demands of his family; yet as he had given strong proofs of uncommon industry, self-denial and perseverance, Mr. Moore had not doubted but that he might rely on such a father to defray a considerable part of his son's expences at the University. However, the ardor of friends, when thoroughly in earnest, is not to be easily damped by untoward events. Often it is rather roused by them into greater activity and exertion. It was so in this instance. Mr. Moore, who had been hesitating, whether he should

* He used to tell the following anecdote with a good deal of humour. "Once, on a Saturday evening, I surprised my wife, by sending home a Greek book for my son Joseph, instead of a joint of meat for the succeeding Sunday's dinner. It was too true," added he, "that I could not send home both."

venture to send his favourite Scholar to the University, on account of the great expences of that sort of education, and the inability of the father, now saw no difficulty in undertaking the case of the fatherless boy. Mountains instantly became mole-hills; and the event, which had threatened to ruin Mr. Moore's project effectually, was made the occasion of carrying it into execution with facility.—Milner was already well known in Leeds, and had begun to teach grown-up children of both sexes, in some opulent families, the Grammar, and the art of composition in the English language. This laudable employment procured him a good deal of ready money, while several parents, to whom he had given much satisfaction by his industry and his skill in teaching, sympathized exceedingly with the youth who had just lost his father, and with HIM, to all appearance, his prospect of a University-education.

At this favourable moment, when the disposition to serve young Milner, in any way that should be deemed practicable, was pretty general; when the purses of the wealthy were ready to be opened in his favour; the Tutor of Catharine Hall, Cambridge, an old acquaintance of Mr. Moore, wrote to him to the following effect: "The office of Chapel-clerk with us will soon be vacant; and if you have any clever lad, who is not very rich, and whom you would wish to assist, send him to us."—Mr. Moore instantly communicated this proposal to several of the liberal Gentlemen above alluded to, who all cheerfully concurred in it.

Let the reader now view Milner at the University, eighteen years of age, but in appearance a child; so much had his growth been checked by ill health.

But from this period to the age of twenty-two, the native vigour of his constitution showed itself, and he continued to grow taller and stronger.

It cannot be considered, in the slightest degree, as a mark of disrespect to the present society of Catharine Hall at Cambridge, to observe, that at the distant period of which we are now speaking, a student of their College could have exceedingly little help in his Academical studies from the governing part of the society. The Master was old and absolutely superannuated. The Tutor was also old and ineffective: He was a sensible man; but had been little conversant in the Mathematical and Philosophical studies, which were then growing most rapidly into fashion. It was, indeed, the practice to engage private Tutors; and the price was then only twenty pounds per annum; but Milner had no superfluities. To these circumstances let it be added that Milner was, perhaps, as raw and ignorant a lad, in worldly matters, as ever came to the University. He had hardly a single acquaintance there; and had probably never been a mile from his own cottage before. The writer has had a good deal of experience of the nature of an Academical degree at Cambridge, and of the requisite qualifications; and when he reflects upon these circumstances connected together, he feels the greatest surprise that Milner should have obtained so high a situation as he did in the Mathematical and Philosophical list of honours; and the more so, as most certainly he had no peculiar relish for those studies. —He was the third SENIOR OPTIME.

The Chancellor of the University gives annually two Gold Medals to the best proficients in classical

learning, provided they be found, at degree-time, among the SENIOR OPTIMES for Mathematical and Philosophical knowledge. From the first moment that Milner heard of these honours, he secretly set his heart upon obtaining one of them; and, accordingly, read Thucydides and Sophocles, Cicero and Horace, day and night; but yet did not neglect the Mathematical and Philosophical studies, so as to run any hazard of not being qualified to be a candidate for a Medal.—We have seen that he obtained a much higher degree than was necessary for that purpose*.

It might seem invidious to record the names of the unsuccessful candidates on that occasion; but it can be offensive to none, if the writer contents himself with saying, that the Candidates for the Chancellor's Medals in the year 1766, were uncommonly numerous and able; and that nobody perhaps remembers above half so many in one year. —Very high situations are at this moment held by some of them in the Church and in the Law.— Dr. John Law, the present Lord Bishop of Elphin, and Joseph Milner, obtained the two prizes.

Several respectable Members of the University of Cambridge are alive, who well remember the general surprise caused by the success of Milner; and also how his humorous and spirited translations of Terence and Plutarch, shown by the Examiners to their friends, were handed about through the Colleges, and excited general admiration.

Milner's strength and excellence, as a classical

* Any SENIOR OPTIME is qualified to be a candidate for one of the Chancellor's Medals. Perhaps twelve may be called the average number of Senior Optimes in any one year.

Scholar, consisted in the soundness of his understanding, the extensiveness of his reading, and the retentiveness of his memory, which enabled him to enter into the spirit of an author, and to develop the meaning of the most obscure and difficult expressions. Similar passages and similar constructions perpetually occurred to his mind, and assisted him in untying knots, which were above the art of persons of more confined reading, or of less penetration.—In the above contest for the Medals, most of the Candidates had possessed the advantage of being educated at some of the great public schools; and, probably, were much superior to Milner in the knowledge of pronunciation. For besides that the knowledge of the quantity of syllables is usually less attended to in country-schools, the Yorkshire boys are well known to bring along with them a most unpleasant accent.

Joseph Milner would now have gladly remained in the University, and increased his literary reputation by employing his time in reading and meditation, and in composition. But there was no opportunity of electing him Fellow at Catharine Hall, and he was already somewhat in debt. During his first year's residence at Cambridge, the young Student had lost, by a premature death, his affectionate Schoolmaster; and the management of Milner's slender finances was transferred from the economical hands of Mr. Moore to those of a careless and dissipated person. He was not old enough for Deacon's Orders, and it became absolutely necessary that he should look out for some employment.

He became assistant in a school, and afterward in the care of his Church, to a worthy Clergyman,

the Rev. Mr. Atkinson of Thorp-Arch, near Tadcaster. This country-situation was delightful: the family was extremely orderly and agreeable; and the master of it well informed and regular. Here he contracted an intimate friendship with his son the Rev. Mr. Myles Atkinson, the present excellent Minister of St. Paul's at Leeds. He always highly valued this connexion; and very often lamented that he could profit so little by it, on account of the distance at which these friends were settled from each other; and the more so, after it had pleased Almighty God to unite the heads and hearts of both so zealously and so perseveringly in the same views of the ministerial functions.

In this new situation Mr. Milner was faithful to his engagements, and exemplary in the discharge of his duties, according to the knowledge which he then had of himself and of the Scriptures.—But, in fact, he always gave this account of himself, "That he was at that time worldly-minded, and greedy of literary fame."

It is not much known that his poetical talents were very considerable. His schoolmaster, Mr. Moore, discovered them very early; and repeatedly exhorted his pupil to a diligent cultivation of them. Even before he took his degree of B. A. at Cambridge, he had conceived and begun to execute the bold project of an Epic Poem of twelve books, constructed very much on the ideas of Milton. He gave it the name of DAVIDEIS, or Satan's various attempts to defeat the purpose of the Almighty, who had promised that a Saviour of the World should spring from King David. At Thorp-Arch he prosecuted this work with diligence,

during intervals of leisure; and he afterwards finished it at Hull.

This Poem is about the same length as Paradise Lost. It was written in the short space of two years, or a little more. The manuscript of it is in existence, and is a fine monument of the Author's learning, taste, genius, and exuberant imagination. As it was written most rapidly, and has undergone hardly the smallest corrections, it is to be expected that such a hasty production of a youth should be incorrect and indigested. Mr. Milner, very soon after the first copy was finished, put his papers into the hands of that excellent Scholar and learned Critic, Dr. Hurd, the present Bishop of Worcester, who with great kindness and condescension took the trouble to peruse them, and with great integrity returned him his sincere opinion and advice. The writer does not feel himself authorized to take the liberty of communicating to the public the contents of a private letter written on such an occasion; suffice it to say, that it was highly complimentary to the talents, learning, and principles of the Author; and that the advice on the whole was to defer the publication, partly on account of the times being singularly unfavourable to an Epic Poem, however constructed; partly to a want of sufficient variety in his plan to engage the attention of the public; and partly that the Author's judgment might be more matured for the correction of it.

The advice was, unquestionably, excellent; and the Author had the wisdom to follow it. The Bishop told him, that whether he ever should publish the Poem or not, "it was a noble exercise of his talents, and the fruits would remain with him;" and so they

did, in many respects that might be mentioned. There is in all Mr. Milner's writings a boldness of imagery, and an animated glow of expression, which, doubtless, owe their origin to his having been so much accustomed, when young, to poetical figures of composition.—Mr. Milner laid the Poem aside; —probably with an intention to review, reconsider, and correct it;—but Providence had for him other things in store.

He did not remain long with Mr. Atkinson of Thorp-Arch. While yet in Deacon's Orders he happened to observe in the York Courant an Advertisement for a Head-Master of the Grammar-school of Hull. He instantly, with the advice of all his friends, applied for the situation, and obtained it; and very soon after was elected Afternoon Lecturer of the principal church in the same town. His easy success in these applications was owing, partly to the splendor of his character, and partly to the recommendation of powerful friends at Leeds.—Under his auspices the School, which had dwindled almost to nothing, through the negligence of the former Master and Assistant, soon acquired a very considerable celebrity, which it retained for many years, and as long as his health permitted him to bestow upon it the requisite attention. With the increase of Scholars the Master's salary received proportional augmentation, and Mr. Milner's income now on the whole amounted to upwards of 200*l.* per annum.

It may be useful to observe how he acted upon this great change of circumstances.

The father of Mr. Milner was a man of strong understanding, and had felt, in his own case, the

want of a good education. In consequence he formed a very early resolution to remedy that defect, in regard to his children, to the utmost of his power, whatever inconveniences he or his family might experience from so laudable an attempt. Accordingly, his youngest son Isaac, when a little boy of six years old, began to accompany his brother Joseph every day to the Grammar-school; and at ten years of age could construe Ovid and Sallust into tolerable English, and was then beginning to learn the rudiments of the Greek language. The premature death of their father, above-mentioned, ruined all the prospects of Isaac's advancement in learning. His mother was obliged to abandon the prosecution of her husband's plan; and that her son might acquire a livelihood, by honest industry, she wisely employed him in learning several branches of the woollen manufactory at Leeds.

BUT THE BOWELS OF JOSEPH YEARNED UPON HIS YOUNGER BROTHER; and as soon as we find him in a situation to do him service, and to prosecute the excellent system of the father, he loses not a moment's time, but instantly releases him from his temporary obligations at Leeds, and takes him under his own tuition at Hull. Isaac's memory was not bad; for, though at this period he had been absent several years from the Grammar-school at Leeds, and was still but a boy, he was found perfectly well qualified to act as assistant to his brother, in teaching the lower boys of his crowded school at Hull; so well initiated had he been in the Latin and Greek languages by the same Mr. Moore.

He redoubled his diligence in order that he might make up for the lost years; and was sent to Queen's

College Cambridge, in the year 1770. Under Providence, he owes his present honourable and elevated situations as Dean of Carlisle and Master of Queen's College, and Professor of Mathematics in the University of Cambridge—indeed, he owes all he has to the kindness of this same brother; and he here WILLINGLY acknowledges the obligation with tears of gratitude and affection.—"He made" ISAAC "glad with his acts, and his memorial is blessed for ever*."

Perhaps no two brothers were ever more closely bound to each other. Isaac, in particular, remembers no earthly thing without being able to connect it, in some way, tenderly, with his brother Joseph. During all his life he has constantly aimed at enjoying his company as much as circumstances permitted. The dissolution of such a connexion could not take place without being severely felt by the survivor. No separation was ever more bitter and afflicting; with a constitution long shattered by disease, he never expects to recover from THAT wound.

The dutiful and kind attentions of Joseph Milner were not confined to his brother Isaac. His good and valuable mother was growing old at that time. She had gone through a variety of hardships, and was now living at Leeds in very contracted circumstances. He sent for her to Hull, to live with him, and to manage his house; which she did with great cheerfulness and activity for upwards of twenty years. He also sent for two indigent orphans, the children of his eldest brother, and took effectual care of their education.

Mr. Milner, from his first going into Orders, was

* 1 Maccab. iii. 7.

a very earnest and zealous preacher; but, as he himself used to say,—"he preached himself, and not Jesus Christ:"—Yet even then, in his first compositions, there was much more of the peculiarities of Christianity than is usually to be found in the general strain of discourses from the pulpit. —Several truly religious persons have thought that he was really enlightened in the nature of the Gospel of Christ, when he first came to Hull. But it may be presumed that, in such a matter as this, he himself must have been the best judge: and he always urged it as no inconsiderable proof of the contrary, "that he was universally applauded at that time, which," continued he, "never happens among large and mixed congregations, when the truth, as it is in Jesus, is set forth with distinctness and with energy." The first Sermon which he preached at Hull gained him the hearts of the people, and is supposed to have contributed much to secure his election to the School. Some years afterwards, when his ideas of Christianity were materially altered, he took this very Sermon into the pulpit, read several parts of it, and endeavoured to make his meaning clearly understood by a free avowal of the ERRORS which that composition, formerly so much applauded, contained; and, by contrasting them with his altered sentiments at the latter period.

How inscrutable and how wonderful are the ways of Providence! Certain it is that Mr. Milner was a great favourite with his Patrons, the Mayor and Aldermen of Hull, and with the leading gentlemen of the town, for the space of three years from the time of his election; and it is equally certain, that about that time a most important revolution in his

sentiments and conduct took place; which revolution, if it had happened before he was elected to the school and lectureship, would, in all probability, have prevented his having a single vote for either of those situations. His aged mother might have died in want: His nephew and niece might have remained destitute orphans, and uneducated; and his brother Isaac, instead of being employed in writing these pages in the Master's Lodge of Queen's College, or in the Deanery of Carlisle, might at this moment have been labouring with his hands in the manufactories of Yorkshire.—But all these are poor insignificant trifles, compared with what remains to be mentioned.—The populous Town of Hull might have continued in the dark, irreligious, state in which he found it: Thousands might have died without ever hearing the glad tidings of the Gospel properly stated; and the succession of truly worthy and evangelical preachers, who have been his pupils or contemporaries, might never have taken place.

Far be it from the mind of the writer, by intimating such possibilities, to insinuate in the slightest degree that the divine agency is confined in its operations to the use of certain things, persons, or modes: If He willeth, who shall hinder!

> "Thousands at his bidding speed,
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest."
>
> MILTON.

The very same events might have taken place in their order by similar or by different means. Nevertheless, this, again, amounts to no more than mere possibility and conjecture: Little stress is to be laid on human foresight; and it will always be

our true wisdom to observe, with grateful and reverent attention, what God has actually done, and to trace his directing hand in the causes and connexions of events. Such lessons are truly instructive in contemplation: They produce piety and humility; and they call forth admiration and gratitude.

" If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The revolution above mentioned in Mr. Milner's character was by no means partial or confined. From about the year 1770 to the day of his death, he became entirely and sensibly a different man from what he had been before. In public and in private, and in every part of his conduct, he illustrated and confirmed, by his personal example, the precepts which he zealously inculcated.—In what then did this important change consist?

The bulk of the inhabitants of Hull did not think any change in him to be either necessary or desirable. They were highly pleased with their diligent Schoolmaster and popular Preacher: They expected no improvement in him; they wished for none: They respected his talents and attainments; and they looked forward to derive great advantage from these in the education of their children. His moral character was without a spot. Regular, temperate, and decorous in his external conduct; orthodox in his religion, and loyal* in his political sentiments, he was esteemed a model for imitation: amid such an assemblage of excellencies men were puzzled to fix upon any defect, and they only expected from him perseverance in well-doing.

Mr. Milner was always eminently loyal, and sincerely attached to the constitution of his country, both in church and

In the sequel, the internal nature of this change will be more satisfactorily and more explicitly opened by those who had the best opportunities of knowing the truth, and who, by their wisdom and experience in divine things, are far better qualified to judge than the writer of this Narrative*. At present suffice it to say briefly, that at about the age of fifteen he was very seriously impressed with the importance of practical religion. He studied the Scriptures diligently, meditated deeply on the essential doctrines, and experienced much conflict of mind. His excellent mother, at the same period,

state. The spirit of fearless innovation, revolt and contempt of authority, which he had the grief to see break forth in his latter days, was strenuously and often successfully opposed by him.

EDITOR; the Rev. Wm. Richardson.

The Rev. Dr. Isaac Milner, the writer of this Narrative, takes this opportunity of observing, that wherever the word EDITOR was prefixed or subjoined to any note or observation in the first Edition, that note or observation is due to the Rev. Wm. Richardson, who was the real Editor of that Edition of the work. In this second edition, Dr. M. has added the initials W. R. of Mr. R.'s name, for the purpose of more effectually preventing mistakes.

* This has been deemed unnecessary, after what is said on the subject in the course of the Narrative. The change produced in the character of Job, by the discipline he went through, will illustrate that which takes place in those Christians, who have been conscientious from their early youth. The nature of it is thus expressed: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."—The great truths of religion, when held merely as opinions, may form strict, devout, and exemplary characters; but they must be received by that FAITH which SUBSTANTIATES things hoped for, and REALIZES things unseen, in order to produce a new creature, one who ABHORS HIMSELF, and submits unto the righteousness of God. Mr. Milner certainly, like Job, thought too highly of himself, and was a proud and a self-righteous man, till the glorious "Gospel of Christ came to him, not in the word only, but in power."

EDITOR, W. R.

was become very earnest in religious concerns, and was herself intelligent in the practical parts of the Scriptures. Mr. Milner always ascribed his first religious emotions, under the direction of Divine Providence, to the example, exhortation, and admonition of his mother. The father of Mr. Milner did not much like all this. He was sound in speculative principle, and exemplary in moral conduct, but had not learned the humbling doctrines of the Gospel. On the contrary, he was disposed to ridicule enthusiastic and over-religious persons, as he called them; and his great object, at that time, was to divert the attention of his son Joseph from subjects which he conceived might give a gloomy cast to his mind, and injure his rising fame, both by the reproach which attaches to such pursuits, and by retarding his rapid progress in other things.

He had no great difficulty in carrying this point. Joseph's extreme seriousness was not of long duration*. He continued sound and orthodox in the faith; he read the Scriptures daily in their original language, and grew wise in all critical inquiries respecting them; but he ceased to trouble himself with what he afterwards used to call vital, practical, experimental religion; he was contented with mere

* The Editor has heard Mr. M. mention the time when he deliberately renounced the grand Protestant doctrine of Justification by Faith, which he afterwards, with Luther and the whole body of the Reformers, so strenuously maintained, as ARTICULUS STANTIS, VEL CADENTIS ECCLESIÆ. This added bitterness to his distress when the truths of Christianity recovered their influence over his mind and conscience; for he was tempted to consider himself as having been guilty of an act of apostacy. W. R.

It will appear afterwards, in what sense Mr. Milner was to be considered as orthodox in sentiment at that time.

morality.--His heart was panting after literary fame; and we have seen how this passion must have been fed by what passed after his father's death, at Leeds and at Cambridge, and by success at Hull at so early a period of life.

If Mr. Milner's gifts and various good fortune had hitherto tended to gratify human pride and vanity, we shall find that, by and by, he met with plentiful cause of mortification.

From the commencement of a change in his sentiments and practice, to the time when his judgment may be considered as settled and confirmed, an interval of at least two years elapsed. However, the alteration, when first perceived, was sufficient to excite suspicion and alarm, though the better sort of people did not immediately abandon their favourite Schoolmaster and Preacher. They could not think of this without reluctance. It must even be owned that they gave him a fair time for trial; and they also made some private attempts to reclaim him; but all in vain.

Once in particular, at the conclusion of a very decent convivial meeting, in the house of one of the first families of the place, where some of the more respectable Clergy were assembled, and among them one Clergyman of learning and distinction, whose residence was not at Hull, and who happened to be on a visit at that time, a general attack was made on the young Enthusiast. This evidently appeared to have been preconcerted, though the writer does not deny that the intentions might be friendly, and that the plan might originate in a desire to preserve Mr. Milner from plunging deeper into

Methodism. This attack, though attended with some ridiculous circumstances in the course of it, was truly instructive in the event. The advantages of serious study of the Scriptures, and of the knowledge of them, appeared in the strongest light: The assailants agreed in no one thing but in zeal to run down Mr. Milner, and in some general extravagant charges of Enthusiasm, Methodism, and such like. They could state NO DISTINCT article of false doctrine, or even of disagreement; and when the Bible was appealed to, they proved themselves such wretched Textuaries that they could not produce a single passage to their purpose; and were unable even to find those passages of which they seemed to have some faint and imperfect recollection. Mr. Milner patiently endured their reproaches; and smiled while they were fruitlessly turning to and fro the pages of an excellent Bible, which seemed to have been very little used. In those days he had begun to carry a Bible constantly in his pocket; a practice which he never left off. When the party were exhausted, and had become pretty silent, he pulled out his little pocket-Bible, now grown dirty and tattered by much wearing, the obvious comparison of which with their elegant one conveyed a silent but sufficiently intelligible admonition, and proved no bad introduction to what he had to say.—In a word, he entered fully into an explanation of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity; confirmed his arguments and statements by numerous and appropriate passages of Scripture, and completed his defence by reading the texts which they had sought for in vain, and then by an-

swering the supposed objections.—Several of the party freely acknowledged afterward "they had better have let him alone."

But Mr. Milner's company did not continue long to be called for in genteel and convivial meetings. The man who was grown insupportable in the pulpit ceased to be a desirable guest at the table; and indeed his own heart was now so much engaged in different branches of practical religion, that he had little time, and no taste for trifling company. He was constantly seeking opportunities to say "a word in season." He had left off playing at cards; he was no longer seen at the playhouse or the assembly; his presence checked and rebuked indecent conversation, and irregularities of every kind, and when a company, by being less trifling, or by some ill-natured attack on religion, presented an opening for grave conversation, Mr. Milner would often express himself with so much seriousness, and so much just admonition, that "men of the world,*" no longer felt themselves at ease in his presence. They, on the one hand, did not choose to be thus exposed to his censures, nor to have their consciences made uneasy by him. He, on the other, devoted the little time which he could spare from absolute duty, or from private study, to those social visits which had the express design of promoting the interests of religion.

These and similar causes concurred to separate Mr. Milner more and more from people of superior rank. They, with very few exceptions, were never seen at church when HE preached; and he rarely

* See Sermon XXI. of this Volume, for the character of men of the world.

met THEM, except once a year officially, as Chaplain to the Mayor, or on some such occasion. He has been heard to say, that the dislike of him proceeded to such a height, that few persons who wore a tolerably good coat, would take notice of him when they met him in the street. Nevertheless, "the common people heard him gladly." The large church where he preached was crowded beyond example: The care of the soul became the topic of common conversation: Great seriousness prevailed: Drunkards and Debauchees were reformed: The town assumed a new appearance: Great numbers, whose consciences were awakened under his preaching, earnestly inquired, "what must we do to be saved?" The sick sent for him to their chambers for spiritual advice; and when he returned home, he found his house crowded with visitors who had the same object in view. His strength was exhausted in this service; and his health suffered exceedingly by often going out in the winter evenings of Sundays, after he had heated himself by delivering a long Sermon with the utmost exertion. Embarrassing and difficult cases were frequently proposed to him, where Heads of families or Superiors insisted on their dependants leaving off their religious practices. Many are alive, who well remember that an inundation of persecution in various ways broke in and continued for a long time.

Some instances happened, as will always be the case, where the conduct of persons who professed religion, was imprudent and indefensible, and perhaps even immoral: these cases were circulated and exaggerated with indecent satisfaction, and unceasing clamour. All fell heavy upon the Enthu-

siast Milner, who thus became the general topic of abusive conversation among profane persons. The Preacher and his adherents were insulted, derided, and hunted down with the most contradictory accusations. Sometimes it was insinuated that he was a sly hypocrite, who himself saw through the delusions with which he turned the heads of others; and who in reality was expecting preferment from certain powerful and notorious Enthusiasts: Others represented him as fond of popular applause; and many believed him to be actually beside himself.

Mr. Milner's labours were not confined to the TOWN of Hull. He was Curate, for upwards of seventeen years, of North Ferriby, and afterwards Vicar of the same. This beautiful little village lies near to the Humber, about nine miles from Hull, and abounds with the country-seats of the opulent. It was impossible to represent the Curate or the Vicar of this place as serving the cure for the sake of filthy lucre. The average annual profits were under thirty pounds, notwithstanding the great wealth of the inhabitants. On the Sunday mornings, in summer, before the regular service, Mr. Milner heard the children repeat the Catechism, and explained it to them in familiar language, many grown-up persons attending. When the morning service was ended, he returned to Hull, to preach in the afternoon. He continued this laborious practice for many years, and as long as his health permitted him. At Ferriby also, as at Hull, the richer sort became disgusted with his doctrine, and impatient of his exhortations; but the COMMON PEOPLE, from all the neighbouring parts, and not a few of the more substantial farmers, flocked to his Church, and heard the word with gladness.

As it was impossible for Mr. Milner to reside among his flock at Ferriby; and as he was sensible how much the probability of doing good is diminished by only seeing the people once in the week, however faithful the preacher may be on the Sunday, his zeal for men's eternal welfare induced him to visit this country village on the week days, as often as a holy-day allowed of his absence from his school, and generally on the afternoons of Saturdays. Many of his own parishioners and other serious persons used to meet him at his lodgings, or at some other convenient house; and on these occasions he read and explained the Scriptures, and exhorted his people and prayed with them.

Many years ago a neighbouring Clergyman of a most notoriously bad character, was so incensed at this practice of Mr. Milner, that he brought him before the Mayor of Hull by an information under the Conventicle Act. The Mayor and the greater part of the Aldermen disliked Mr. Milner's proceedings; but they despised and detested the Informer; and as they did not sufficiently feel their ground, they adjourned the consideration of the affair. Before the next hearing Mr. Milner had procured the best legal information which the kingdom afforded; and he came into court with a confidence grounded on knowledge. With great respect he informed the Mayor and Aldermen, "that he obeyed their summons merely out of civility to his patrons; but that the whole matter respecting his conduct in this instance was so circumstanced, as not to come under their jurisdiction or authority: that if an offence had been committed, it was of an ecclesiastical nature; and lastly, that he spoke ad-

visedly, and was well assured that by meeting his own parishioners in his own parish, he had done nothing contrary to any law whatsoever."—The affair was quashed; and the Mayor of that day, a person neither remarkable for religion, morality, nor decorum, was heard to use expressions upon the occasion, which need not be here repeated, and to recommend it to the two Parsons, instead of quarrelling, to use the means, which have frequently been found efficacious in cheering the spirits, expelling care, and restoring good humour*.

Does the curious reader grow impatient to be satisfied more particularly respecting the cause, which produced all this prodigious alteration both in Mr. Milner's own mind, and in the regards of his people? Mr. Milner's publications will most effectually satisfy every inquiry of this sort. The Author, "though dead, yet speaketh:" And, as no man on earth ever wrote, preached, or conversed with less disguise, let the serious reader consult his various writings. A more just, more concise, and more intelligible account cannot be given of his principles, than that he was truly a sincere member of the Church of England. He believed the Articles of the Church in their plain, literal, and grammatical sense; and all his Sermons were penned according to that interpretation of Scripture which they contain and express. With many persons, unacquainted with the history of religious controversy in these kingdoms, a sort of puzzle may still remain how such sentiments could on the one hand produce all this dislike and persecution from some of the people, and this resentment from his clerical

* To shake hands and drink a bottle of wine together.

brethren; and on the other, could occasion such flocking to his Churches. To explain this difficulty in detail and with minuteness, is neither pleasant nor necessary in this place; but it may in some measure open the eyes of the intelligent to suggest, "that our Author certainly did believe and maintain that the Clergy of the Establishment, in general, had very much deviated from the principles which they profess, and to which they subscribe their assent: That the reading desk and the pulpit were often at variance; and that instead of setting forth to the understanding with plainness, and pressing upon the conscience with energy, the great and peculiar truths of the Gospel, such as the doctrines of Original Sin, of Justification by Faith, and of Regeneration by the Holy Spirit, as stated in the Articles and Homilies of the Church of England, the Clergy in general were substituting in their place a system of little more than Pagan Ethics." He further maintained, "that by their fruits ye might know them; that one system was fruitful in good works, and the other productive of pride, self-righteousness, and attachment to the ways of the world." To all which it should be added, that Mr. M. had never the least hesitation in owning,—that he himself, during the first years of his being in holy orders, was as deeply involved as any person could be in this charge of DEPARTING from the genuine religion of the Bible and of the Establishment to which he belonged;—that he had been active and earnest in corrupting the most important passages of Scripture and Articles of Faith;—that, though his own conscience never in the smallest degree accused him of insincerity or hypocrisy, yet his "zeal had been

without knowledge;" that the tendency of his warm addresses to the people, before his conversion, when he used often to bring forward the peculiarities of the Gospel, must have been to explain away those peculiarities, and misguide his audience;—and, lastly, that, in fact, at that time, he did not understand the nature of Christ's Salvation, had never experienced its humbling operation on the mind of a truly penitent sinner, but was building an edifice both of religious doctrine and practice on a self-righteous foundation.

The reader is to observe, that the state of persecution above described, as well as the violent agitation of men's passions concerning religious subjects, did not continue during the whole of Mr. Milner's ministry. The storm subsided, a good deal, after the first seven or eight years; whereas the duration of Mr. Milner's serious and active ministry is to be reckoned from about the twenty-seventh year of his age to his fifty-fourth.—Many causes concurred to abate the storm of prejudice, and to produce milder sentiments of him and his ministrations.

The great cause of all was the steady, upright, persevering, disinterested conduct of the Preacher himself. Even the illiberal, selfish, and impenetrable tempers of the farmers and country-people were affected with the thought, "This Man comes here in bad weather when he is not obliged to come, and takes all this extraordinary pains, and gets nothing for it but abuse. There must be good motives at the bottom." And in the town, the more thinking part, by degrees, ceased to denominate his excesses by any harsher name than MISTAKEN ZEAL, while

they were compelled to acknowledge his exemplary benevolence and indefatigable industry.

The stale, hackneyed objections of preaching Faith only, and of telling men that, if they did but believe, they might continue to be as wicked as they pleased, and still go to Heaven, were so unfounded in truth, and had been so often answered and confuted, and Mr. Milner was so distinct and guarded in his statements of the different branches of Evangelical truth, that every species of opposition, in the way of argument, had dwindled to nothing. Thus, the adversaries of the Preacher having lost all hold of the broad and obvious objections, were found by no means sufficiently experienced, either in the history of religious controversies, or in the simple contents of the sacred volumes, to support a plausible opposition by subtle distinctions or dexterous evasions. Even such of the neighbouring Clergy as retained their prejudices in full force, showed their hostility only by retailing wretched and contemptible stories; and by exaggerations and misrepresentations both of actions and words. Tully well observes, that it is an easy matter to turn into ridicule a glowing expression when it is separated from the context, which had warmed the feelings of the audience. "FACILE EST VERBUM ARDENS IRRIDERE EXTINCTIS JAM ANIMORUM INCENDIIS."

Several persons, who in the vigour of their health and spirits, had preserved a bitter, and unconquerable enmity to Mr. Milner and his doctrines, were staggered in their sentiments, and softened in their resentment, as the prospect of the grave grew nearer. Some, who for many years had shut their doors

against their UNCHARITABLE PARSON, now judged him the most wise and faithful adviser that could be found.—Sick persons, in spite of the remonstrances of the healthy branches of the family, in many instances insisted upon seeing the tremendous Enthusiast; and he was admitted into the closet or to the bed-side. On these occasions, Mr. Milner always said he found far more difficulty in managing the healthy by-standers than the sick patient. THEIR object was generally, to quiet the conscience, by puffing up the sick person with the remembrance of his past good actions; and they dreaded lest the Minister should frighten the feeble man to distraction. Mr. M.'s view was directly the contrary, —to lay the penitent sinner at the foot of the cross; and to make a well-founded hope grow out of a genuine contrition. At these times the Parson's words were always watched with jealousy, and sometimes misrepresented with malignity; yet, on the whole, such scenes necessarily tended to soften enmity, and subdue animosity, and in many cases to procure friendship and esteem. Even when the sick man recovered from his danger; and returned, as is too often the case, to his usual careless or wicked course of life; something had passed in those private and awful scenes, which had convinced him of Mr. Milner's sincere regard for men's immortal interests, of his mild and compassionate earnestness as a spiritual instructor, and of his perfect readiness to return good for evil. And it may be added, that something also had probably dropped from the man himself during the alarms of conscience, which he could not entirely forget. Not a single instance occurred, where a person, who had been in such circumstances,

was sufficiently profane and intrepid to revile Mr. Milner in future; but, there were many lamentable instances where the very meeting of his person was diligently avoided: When that did happen, Mr. Milner, with an undescribable mixture of pity, grief, and reproof, darted a piercing look, and heaved a sigh, which were perfectly understood by the unhappy object.

Not only at Hull, but throughout the kingdom, a very considerable revival of practical religion took place during these years, particularly among the poorer and the middle ranks of society. The Methodists* had sounded the alarm; and the Clergy of the Establishment were roused. The Scriptures were examined and searched "whether these things were so." The name of Methodist, when applied to such persons as Mr. Milner, ceased, in a great measure to be disgraceful with thinking people. At least they found that there might be much danger of sweeping away, under such a reproachful description, every thing that was godly. Some of the Bishops, who had conceived great prejudices against

* It is said to have been an observation of Sir George Savile, that the Methodists acted as a blistering plaster upon the backs both of the Clergy and people. They have contributed to the revival of practical religion, and of many of those exploded doctrines of the Reformation which seem necessarily connected with it. But the reproach they have justly incurred on account of the Enthusiasm and Schism which disgrace their dispensation, has fallen upon all the Clergy of the Church of England, who preach her peculiar doctrines, and are in earnest to promote the power of godliness. However soberly and conscientiously they may conform to the rules of their Church, they find themselves suspected of holding wild and dangerous opinions. This cross they endeavour to bear with patience; but it has proved a stumbling-block in the way of some well-disposed young men, who have been hindered from preaching and living as the Gospel requires, for fear of incurring an opprobrious name.

EDITOR, W. R.

every thing connected with that term, saw abundant reason to alter their judgment, and to admit charges of that nature with greater precaution. In a word, it was found necessary to separate what was really wild, disorderly, ranting, indigested, and enthusiastic, from substantial and sound doctrine, and from a sober and laudable contention for the faith of the Gospel. In this revival of religion the dissenters were not without a share; but it was principally brought about in the Establishment. Serious Clergymen increased in number, and so did the serious members of their congregations.

These were among the most powerful causes which concurred to replace Mr. Milner once more in the esteem of the inhabitants of the town and vicinity of Hull.—HE did not return to THEM. They came over to him. Great numbers of the poorer and of the middle classes of society became truly religious in practice; and almost all persons affected to approve Mr. Milner's way of stating the truths of the Gospel. In effect, the sentiments which he defended and explained in the pulpit, became so fashionable, that no Clergyman was well received at Hull, who opposed, or did not support them. There HAD been a time when it was no easy matter for a scholar of Mr. Milner to procure ordination, but every prejudice of that sort had subsided for many years; and the Archbishop of York, in particular, had reason to conclude that there was not in all his Diocese, a Clergyman more sound in principle, or more exemplary in practice, than the man who had formerly been accounted the head of the enthusiasts. In fact, Mr. Milner always exceedingly disapproved of premature ordination; and HIS pupils were always

found, at the times of examination for holy orders, well qualified in learning; nor was he himself ever in his whole life guilty of the smallest irregularity or breach of order; and he was well known as a warm and sincere defender of the Establishment, in his conversations, in his writings, and in his pulpit.

No man, it is supposed, felt more vexation on account of Mr. Milner's preaching, than the Rev. Mr. Robinson, the late Vicar of Hull, did at first. But the Writer knows no proof of many things, which have been advanced with indecent acrimony, respecting that amiable gentleman's resentful feelings against Mr. Milner; and he chooses rather to record what is known with certainty, namely, that Mr. Robinson, in the decline of his life, showed a marked preference of Mr. Milner's preaching. He, probably, saw reason to judge more favourably of the sentiments which he had formerly disliked. Such a change of opinion could not have taken place without a proportional diminution of esteem for his own preaching in former years. It is to be hoped, that this was really the case; for, without entering into any nice detail of his system of instructing the people, it is certain, that in general, the compositions of Mr. Robinson went very little beyond a mere scheme of morality. It was impossible for Mr. Milner to pursue his own plan, without directly thwarting a system of that kind; nor needs it be denied, that frequently the opposition would seem so pointed, that ill-informed or inconsiderate persons might conclude that the Lecturer in the afternoon wrote in direct contradiction to the Vicar in the morning; when in truth, the Lecturer was usually at his country church on the mornings of the Sundays.

This laborious servant of God neither courted nor desired the praises of the world. His eye was single. He used to lament grievously, that his endeavours were less effectual in the latter years of his serious ministry, when he was become a sort of favourite again, than in the former, during the violence of opposition and persecution. He said, "that talkers concerning religion abounded; but that there was very little heart-work: All were become approvers of true Christian doctrine; but numbers, in the midst of their professions, remained too much like the rest of the world; ambitious, greedy of gain; followers of pleasure. Not so formerly," continued he; "a truly sincere and religious character was then derided, despised, persecuted; and nobody, who was not deeply in earnest, supported faithfully the trial of these crosses.—The religion of Christ is not of this world." He further complained, that at Hull, many had heard the Gospel so long without bearing fruit, that they were grown hardened and incurable. What could be more discouraging, than to hear men repeatedly allow that the "affections ought to be set on things above," and discover by their uniform conduct that they continue as greedy as ever of all that the world has to give? He used to express far more hopes in some instances, where there was a warm and eager opposition to his ideas of the Gospel, particularly, if he could discern the conscience to be troubled.

The Writer has been informed, that after all the explanation furnished in the several pages of the first edition of this narrative, respecting the religious sentiments of Mr. Milner, and the change which they underwent, some well-disposed persons have

expressed a wish that still further light had been thrown on these subjects.

Two distinct questions are asked; 1, What defect or failing could there be, or what change could be necessary in the character of a Clergyman, who, from his first going into Orders, is stated to have been a proficient in literature, sacred and profane; perfectly orthodox in opinion; zealous and practical in preaching, and exemplary in conduct? 2. If an alteration for the better really took place; what are the circumstances, which contributed to the improvement of a character, apparently already so excellent?—In one word, what is the history and the nature of the alteration?

It must be acknowledged, that these are not questions of speculation or mere curiosity; they lead to discussions of the last importance: But however instructive the answers to them might prove, it would take the Writer too much out of his way, to attempt now to do complete justice to such inquiries. —He must therefore be brief.

It has already been hinted, that the first question calls for a clear knowledge of the history of the revival of true religion, which has taken place in this country, during the last fifty or sixty years.— Men must be made aware, that there is a manner of maintaining a reputation for orthodoxy, when in fact the sentiments, ON THE WHOLE, are widely different and even opposite to those of our Reformers and the composers of the Articles of our religious Establishment. To the judgment of many persons, the term orthodoxy, conveys no idea beyond the belief of the doctrine of the Trinity and the Atonement of Christ, in some sense or other, without

being very nice in this latter article: and, agreeable to this belief, Divines are often denominated orthodox, or the contrary. To the numerous class of Divines, orthodox in this sense and no further, our Author certainly belonged when he made his first appearance in the town of Hull.—It MAY be said, that, even at that time, it was his custom to introduce into view,—much more than is usually done by those preachers among whom he is here classed, —the peculiar truths of Christianity,—as the Doctrine of Original Sin, of Justification by Faith, and of Regeneration by the Holy Spirit: And this is true; but it will not thence follow, that he ought not to be ranked at that time, among those, whom he afterwards considered as mischievous corrupters* of the pure doctrines of the Church. A thousand times he has been heard to acknowledge†, that whenever he meddled with the precious truths last mentioned, he was sure to mar and spoil them, partly by directly opposing their spirit, and partly by confusing their meaning and frittering it away to nothing; and then he would lament that he had not at that time so learned Christ, as either in his own case, to feel his need of him as a Saviour from sin and its consequences: or, in the cases of others, to know the Scriptural mode of applying the salvation of the Gospel to the relief of contrite hearts and

* The term CORRUPT, is used, here and in other places, for example, in page xxviii. line 4, from the bottom, to imply a perversion of the meaning of plain words or doctrines.—So in 2 Cor. ii. 17. "We are not as many which corrupt the word of God."

† It is scarcely necessary to remark, that these and similar acknowledgments on the part of Mr. M. as in page xxviii. line 24, where it is said, he "had never the least hesitation in owning,"..... were all subsequent to the great change of his sentiments.

troubled consciences.—Here then was the defect of this excellent scholar, this zealous preacher, admired so much, and esteemed so very orthodox; and here the reader finds some answer to the first question. Numbers of learned and amiable clerical characters, it is much to be feared, are at this moment deficient in a similar way.—It is not that the Scriptures are obscure: It is not that our Articles of Religion are not penned with precision;—There is a departure from sound doctrine; and the true cause of this departure is, that we "lean to our own understanding;" and that, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish our own righteousness, we do not submit ourselves to the righteousness of God*.

For the purpose of satisfying, in some measure, the objects of the second question, it may be proper to observe, in the first place, that the nature of the defects of Mr. M. considered either as a teacher of the Gospel, or simply as a Christian, and consequently the nature of the requisite change, which is stated to have actually taken place, in his sentiments and practice, sufficiently appears from what has been now said in answer to the former question. Few words, therefore, respecting the circumstances of this change, will be necessary.

Let it be remembered then, that if any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God†. At all times Mr. M. appears to have been obedient to his convictions: At no period of his life are his faith and practice at variance. We always find him diligent and zealous, always acting upon system, incessantly labouring to

* Rom. x. 3 † John vii. 17.

obtain light in divine things, and diffusing that light, among his fellow creatures, for their eternal benefit with unwearied perseverance. If we cordially receive the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, we are bound to conclude, that such a character, with the Bible in his hands, would not be permitted to REMAIN in the DARK, or in error, as far as essentials are concerned. On this head, the divine promises, directly in point, are innumerable.—Doubtless, therefore, the pious reader, will in the first place, see reason to refer ultimately the revolution in sentiment and practice, of which we are here endeavouring to give some account, to the effectual teaching and influence of the Holy Spirit. Nor is this inference, in the smallest degree, weakened by the consideration of the length of time, which elapsed, before the revolution was completed: The divine agency is not limited to any particular time or mode of operation. It is the NATURE of the change, which points out, and which obliges us to acknowledge, the cause. "This is the finger of God;" the revolution in question, was a revolution of the WHOLE MAN in spiritual things: There was an enlightening of the understanding; there was a conversion of heart.

Some of the more remarkable circumstances, which accompanied this conversion in its progress, are as follow.

After Mr. M. had been a favourite preacher at Hull for several years, he began to suspect that he had been building a religious edifice on a sandy foundation. "By their fruits ye shall know them." He always considered the FRUITS, as the touchstone of sound doctrine: and he observed, that hitherto,

neither in his own mind nor in the conduct of his flock, were those fruits produced, which, in the word of God, are universally ascribed to the Gospel when clearly set forth, and fully received into the heart.—He began to be convinced that there was something, during this life, to be had in religion, of which he himself was not yet in possession; and also that the preaching of the Gospel of Christ ought to produce upon the dispositions of others certain effects, which he had not yet been the means or instrument of producing. There appeared to him to be a joy in believing, a freedom from the fear of death, a deliverance from the bondage of sin and the love of the world, and a taste for holiness and heavenly things,—of all which he himself at present knew little or nothing, but by hearsay. A secret conviction of this sort gradually gained ground in his mind, and met him in all his religious inquiries. The authentic accounts of holy men in Scripture and elsewhere, all tended to the same point. His eyes were in a measure opened; but as yet he saw as "through a glass darkly."

In this situation, a natural and obvious dilemma occurred to him. Is the Gospel of peace no longer the same as formerly? Has it lost its force and influence? or, Do I fail in the use and application of it? Is the Lord's hand shortened, that it can no longer save? or, Am I a workman, who ought to be ashamed, because I do not rightly divide the word of truth*?

From the moment that doubts and suspicions of this kind laid hold of the mind of Mr. M. we find, that,—for a time,—there was an end of all

* 2 Tim. ii. 15.

his internal comfort and tranquillity. The man was too much in earnest, and had too much light to be satisfied with pharisaical forms, or even with external morality; but as yet, he had not light enough to comprehend the nature and extent either of the healing or of the sanctifying efficacy of the religion of Jesus: he did not, as yet, understand what was afterward, with him, a very favourite passage of the New Testament,—that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Let the reader attentively consider the perplexed condition of this young convert:—He is deeply impressed with a sense of the value of an immortal soul: He has the most affectionate regard for the eternal interests of his congregation; and he would be delighted to be the blessed instrument of saving their souls;—but what is to be done? He trembles for the safety of his own!

Persons, who themselves have never experienced similar internal darkness, distress, and trials, nor heard much of cases of this kind, are extremely apt to wonder, that so good a man, as they are disposed to denominate any one of the class to which Mr. M. belonged at this period of his life, should be harassed with anxieties respecting the salvation of his soul. Whatever doctrine be true, they think, such men must be safe;—can have nothing to fear.

> For modes of faith let senseless zealots fight,
> His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

Observations of this sort, however grateful,—because flattering,—to the human heart in general, never fail to disgust the truly awakened sinner. He knows that they originate in a pharisaical way of

thinking, and imply a most deplorable deficiency of self-knowledge. Accordingly, whenever the retrospective contemplation of his own good actions was proposed to Mr. M. as a proper source of comfort, he would say,—and sometimes hastily,—"You know nothing of ME, you know nothing of yourself, you know nothing of the human heart." For the intelligent reader is not to forget, that this man is still under the guidance of the good Spirit of Light and Truth; and that though he is described to be in great darkness of mind, yet in reality he is not "far from the kingdom of God."—The darkness too is only partial: for already he has acquired an exquisite sense and discernment of the EVIL of sin: and it is chiefly in regard to the remedy that his eyes are shut: he discerns not the RICHES of the Gospel. Already he has a clear insight into the spiritual nature of the holy Law of God, which, as a schoolmaster, is bringing him to Christ; but he is not yet enabled, with St. Paul, to say, "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."—By and by, his goings will be established, his feet will be placed upon a rock, and a new song will be put in his mouth*.

But the nature of his happy deliverance will be the more clearly understood, the more perfectly we comprehend his PRESENT condition.

Observe, then, the dealings of Providence.

The sense of his own unworthiness increases; his anxieties grow more distressing, his conscience more and more troubled; he goes mourning all the day long.—Let no one suspect the consciousness of some gross vice or wickedness to have been the

* Psalm xl. 2, 3.

cause of all this: For, it might be no easy matter,—at least in our ordinary intercourse with mankind,—to point out a purer character†. Several of his contemporaries, some of them of his intimates, are alive, and will speak positively both to the goodness† of his heart, and to the innocence of his habits: Many circumstances providentially concurred to preserve him from the excesses and irregularities of youth; and we have seen that, afterward, he spent the greatest part of his time, either in laudable studies in private, or in the industrious discharge of his professional duties.

This deep concern of mind is from other causes.

He is humbled and self-abased before God, not on account of any particularly GREAT or GROSS sins which he has committed, but because with him, no sins are LITTLE: his conscience is troubled, not because he has more sins to lament than others have, but because his keen, comprehensive, spiritual, eye, discovers numerous sins, where others see none; and, in regard to his anxiety and distress, not only an awful apprehension of eternity hangs heavy upon his mind, but the sense of his state of alienation from a holy and gracious God, is beginning to grow painful and intolerable.—This last-mentioned cause of sorrow, in a truly awakened conscience, is always a mystery to men of the world: Nor is it possible they should comprehend it, till they acquire some relish for the beauty of holiness.

† † The writer believes that on this occasion, by using such terms, as PURER CHARACTER, and GOODNESS of heart, in their ordinary acceptation, he shall convey his meaning more concisely, at least, and perhaps better, than in any other way.—True religion teaches us to give a very different meaning to these and other words of this kind.

If these facts and observations have served to open, in a degree, to the reader's view, the real state of the case which he wishes to understand;—let him now recollect two things; 1, that Mr. M. in whatever he happened to be materially interested, was not of a temper to do things by halves: and, 2, that the eternal life and happiness, both of himself and of his flock, were at stake.—He prayed fervently and incessantly. He searched the Scriptures with unexampled diligence; and he conversed with serious and godly people, wherever he could find them. His health suffered not a little from agitation and distress of soul; and from want of sleep; but, perhaps, his hardest conflict arose from a degree of harassing uncertainty, lest, as a spiritual adviser, he should be misleading his congregation in the great concern of religion.

In this situation of his mind some well-meaning persons treated him with much imprudence. They frequently told him, "it was through fear of the world that he did not take a more decisive part, in delivering his doctrines from the pulpit; and that while he continued to act thus, he would never be blessed with a deliverance from his perplexities, and enjoy the liberty of the Gospel." As insinuations of this sort neither had facts to support them, nor were suited to the proud, independent, irritable, temper of Mr. M. they rather tended to increase his prejudices against religious persons of a certain class, and to separate him from their company. He constantly replied, and with a degree of vehemence and positiveness, "that whatever faults he might have, he was sure that fear of the world was not one of them." The WHOLE TENOUR of the

religious part of his life, confirmed this judgment of himself. The writer has heard very useful and excellent Clergymen acknowledge, that they could never bring themselves to lay before their respective Congregations, the numerous disagreeable truths, which Mr. M. constantly did;—much less, with so much pointed distinctness and resolute integrity. The truth is, at the time of which we now speak, he did not yet see his way: he was daily crying out, "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law: yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." He was ready to make his choice, the moment he saw his duty: Few men have been more constantly, or more entirely free from the fear of man than Mr. M.

It was in the diligent use of the Scriptures, in patiently waiting upon God in prayer, and in carefully avoiding every known sin, that he was at last brought to have peace of conscience, and peace with the God whom he wished to serve in newness of life.

He could obtain no useful instruction or advice by communicating with any of his clerical brethren, who at that time lived near him.

The all-important Scripture-doctrine of Justification by Faith only, precisely as it is described in our most excellent Article of Religion*, in a practical way took firm possession of his understanding, and soon displayed its healing power in the due application of it to a wounded conscience. His mind had been well prepared by previous salutary discipline; and the medicine, therefore, had its proper effect.—Let no one be surprised at this; doubt-

* Article XI.

less the preparation of the heart was from the Lord*, and doubtless the medicine was administered by the invisible Physician of souls.—Men of the world judge most erroneously of these matters. They ever suppose that persons of Mr. M.'s stamp are enthusiastic, and much given to depend on sudden feelings and impulses.—On the contrary, Mr. M. justly maintained, that there was no act of a man's life in which he is more rational, or more free from enthusiasm, no act in which a man knows better what he is about, than when, with true penitence and renunciation of all self-dependence, he simply commits himself to Christ by Faith, and relies solely on him for justification and acceptance before God, and for all spiritual blessings both here and hereafter: and he often added, that though warm and grateful affections might very properly accompany this act, yet no sort of reliance was to be placed on sudden feelings, impulses, and transports.

In touching upon a doctrine of such immense importance, and of course so WORTHY to be remembered, the Writer of the Narrative, from a desire of neither burthening nor embarrassing the memory, aims at being as concise as possible: However, he feels that he should do injustice to the character of his deceased near relative, if he did not subjoin;—that though Mr. M. thought it his duty to be remarkably careful, on all occasions, in preserving the above precious doctrine perfectly distinct from all others, yet the nature and the necessity of the fruits of Faith, occupied a very large proportion of his most diligent attention in his in-

* Prov. xvi. 1.

structions and exhortations.—It was his practice constantly to state, that in justifying faith, the true believer received Christ in all his offices, as King, Priest, and Prophet; committed himself wholly to him, and depended entirely on him, not only for pardon, peace of conscience, and eternal life, but also for deliverance from the dominion of sin, and for all holy affections,—in one word, for a NEW HEART.

That "works done before the grace of Christ and the inspiration of his Spirit have the nature of sin*," Mr. M. not only concluded from the express declarations of holy writ, and in harmony with the Articles of the Establishment to which he belonged; but in his own experience also he FELT that this was a lamentable truth; and therefore, both "in season and out of season," he exerted every nerve, to convince gainsayers that, in the present condition of our fallen nature, no works can be acceptable to God, but such as arise from a lively faith in the Redeemer.

How vehement was his eloquence, how unwearied his diligence, in repeatedly urging the necessity of good fruits to prove the soundness of the tree! How pointedly distinct and guarded were his instructions, in assigning to the fruits their right place in the Christian scheme;—that is, in showing that they are the evidence of a vital union with the Saviour; not the ground of acceptance before God. "After all," he would sometimes say, "there is less "contention about the necessity of good works, "than there is concerning the way of producing "them. For when a man is once so thoroughly

* See Article IX. XII. and XIII.

" humbled as to see, that it is wholly by the opera-
" tion of the Spirit of Christ, changing his heart,
" and giving him new dispositions, that he can
" hope to bring forth any works pleasing to God,
" the contest is over, or nearly so; such a man will
" soon submit to the righteousness of God, will lay
" hold of the cross, and cry out, 'God be merciful
" to me a sinner.'—In other words, he will soon
" comprehend, and rejoice in the doctrine of Justi-
" fication by Faith. But, in practically setting
" forth the natural inability of fallen man, and the
" necessity of regeneration, a close preacher rarely
" fails to excite the opposition, and even the indig-
" nation, of the human heart. Nevertheless," continued Mr. M. " men must be born again, or " they cannot see the kingdom of God *."

In illustrating and impressing this doctrine of Regeneration, or New Birth, as well as that of Justification by Faith, Mr. M. exerted all his powers as a teacher. He knew how to be perspicuous, and he was determined to be understood. The subject was highly offensive to many; and, not a few considered it as originating in fancy or fanaticism. However, in the management of it, Mr. M.'s learning and knowledge of the Scriptures secured his authority, and protected him, with all thinking persons, from insult and contempt. His vehement eloquence commanded attention; and his manifest affection for his people, and tender regard for their immortal interests, gradually called forth their esteem and gratitude.

One of the most common objections to the doctrines of grace is, that if mankind are so

* See John iii. 5, 6, & 7.

depraved by nature, that they have no power to do good, they cannot be responsible for their actions. —Mr. M. never meddled with the metaphysical niceties which belong to this inquiry: At least, in the pulpit, he always confined himself to the Scripture-account of the matter. He constantly taught the necessity of the efficacious operation of the Holy Ghost, in restoring to the depraved nature of fallen man, the lost image of God; but, at the same time, he steadily inculcated the important duty of employing proper means to obtain the ends in view.—He ever maintained, that the Spirit of God did not operate on the minds of men, as though they were inert matter, or mechanical engines, but that the blessed effects took place always in the use of our rational faculties, and consistently with every notion of the freedom of the human will, to which any clear and satisfactory meaning can be assigned.

The discerning reader will not fail to have observed, that great sincerity and benevolence toward his fellow-creatures, together with great zeal for their best interests, were component ingredients of Mr. M.'s disposition. It is, perhaps, no slight argument of the goodness of our Creator, that considerable happiness and enjoyment, even in this world, should usually accompany tempers of this sort. Accordingly we find, that all Mr. M.'s intimates pronounce him to have been uniformly one of the most cheerful and most happy men they ever knew.—We have seen indeed, that the steady sunshine of his life was interrupted, during the time in which the revolution of his sentiments was taking place, by a cloudy interval of more than

two years.* The Writer of this Narrative has been willing to gratify the reader with an account of many facts and circumstances, respecting a change of opinion and practice, which, doubtless, is in itself singularly instructive, and was attended with very important consequences, among the numerous inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood of Hull, where Mr. M. lived; but it does not, at present, seem to be his business to indulge himself much in conjectures concerning the final cause of the dealings of Providence with good men. The inquisitive mind of man, it is acknowledged, tempts him to search for an explanation of whatever he judges to be extraordinary or obscure in these dealings;—nor are subjects of this nature in general either forbidden or unfruitful; provided our pious researches be conducted with caution and modesty;—on this occasion, however, let a single word suffice.

Why was this servant of God suffered to remain so long oppressed with grievous doubts, perplexities, and temptations?

Now, though Almighty God is not to be called to "give an account of any of his matters†," yet with cautious and modest humility may we always venture, as hath just been hinted, to consult the Book, with which HE has graciously condescended to furnish his creatures. The Book of His providence in the government of the world lies open to all mankind; and is often exceedingly legible; also We in particular are blessed with another Book, the Book of His revealed will, which is seldom obscure. It would be our wisdom

* See page xxi of this Narrative. † Job xxxii. 13.

to study the meaning of BOTH these Books with more care than we usually do; and especially the latter: where, if we do not always find our doubts explained, or our curiosity gratified, we never fail to meet with useful lessons and examples of submission and resignation.

Then, with these reflections, and with Mr. M.'s case in view, let the pious reader listen to the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews,—"What Son is he, whom the Father chasteneth not *?"

Will any one deny, that this single hint alone, affords a most comfortable, if not an entirely satisfactory, solution of every difficulty arising from any apparent severity in such instances as these? Mr. M. himself lived to be so deeply humbled, and to contemplate habitually the Divine dispensations with so much reverential awe, that any suggestion of the least severity of a gracious God and Redeemer, towards a pardoned sinner, was highly offensive to his feelings.

But, perhaps, he himself may be heard for a moment on a subject, which, no doubt, he had very often considered with all the attention in his power.

For many years before his death, it was become his decided judgment, that the besetting evil of his own constitution was self-righteousness: "Corrupt nature," he said, "laid the foundation of this evil; many of his habits and attainments strengthened it; and Satan, who knew well his weak place, plied him there incessantly."—He would often complain bitterly, that when he seemed to have obtained victory over his constitutional failing, the

* Heb. xii. 7.

enemy would return violently and unexpectedly to the charge: and that it was sometimes with the greatest difficulty he could make head against him. He described the external difficulties and the persecution which he had suffered, when all put together, as not weighing a feather's weight, compared with the heavy pressure of the internal conflict arising from this single cause. Mr. M.'s practical conclusion deserves to be remembered: He had no doubt, but the long and severe discipline which he underwent, was ordered in mercy, for the purpose of subduing his proud, self-righteous, independent spirit; and that though God was pleased to hide his face from him for a time, the chastening was to be considered, as that of a tender Father, who, at the very time of his correction, wishes the best things to his stubborn, self-willed, wayward son. "If he had kissed the rod sooner," he said, "he should have escaped many a pang: but in spite of conviction, he was always setting up for himself,—always aiming at independence: And, it was with the utmost difficulty, he was brought to feel, what a poor creature he was by nature, and how entirely indebted to grace, at every step he attempted to take, in the Christian life."

Thus the intentions of Providence appear sufficiently plain in this instance. Mr. M. became more humble, more wise, and more fit to instruct others.

In this part of the Narrative, the Writer has endeavoured to recollect the precise expressions of Mr. M. as often as he could;—and always to keep close to his sentiment. His particular intimates, Mr. Stillingfleet and Mr. Richardson, to

whom Mr. M. often related the history of his own internal experience in religious concerns, will remember many circumstances to have been exactly as they are here stated.—The latter kind friend has already very truly touched his case in the note, page xix of this Narrative.

With the two Clergymen last mentioned, Mr. Milner was most closely and intimately united in the mutual bonds of Christian affection. The former, now Rector of Hotham, near Market-Weighton, in Yorkshire, is the great-grandson of the learned and celebrated Bishop of that name; and the latter* is Minister of St. Michael-le-Belfrey, in

* The first time that these two friends met, was in the Library of Dr. Drummond, Archbishop of York, at Brodsworth, in the summer of 1768, at a public Ordination. Mr. Milner, who had a little before been fixed at Hull, was a candidate for Priest's Orders, the other for Deacon's. In composing their allotted themes, they sat next to one another, at the same table, when Mr. Richardson was struck with the ease and rapidity with which his neighbour finished his task. When the examination was over, a message came from the Archbishop, to express his satisfaction with the performances that had been sent in to him, but particularly with that of Mr. Milner. This marked superiority drew upon him the attention of all the candidates, and it was soon whispered round, that he was a young man of extraordinary learning and talents, who had distinguished himself at Cambridge, and was likely to make a great figure in the world. He was then a very entertaining companion; but seemed fully conscious of his own intellectual strength: and rather unmerciful in his treatment of dulness or absurdity.

When they next met, it was under very different views of the nature and importance of the truths, to which they had subscribed at their Ordination. They had been gradually led, though with great difficulty, to bow to the authority of the Gospel, and to receive its humbling doctrines. The God of hope had given them a degree of joy and peace in believing, and they were earnestly endeavouring to teach the large flocks committed to their charge the way of salvation, and to preach among them

York.—The friendship and connexion of all the three were founded on the reciprocal belief of each other's Christian sincerity; and were heightened and cemented by a similarity of age, and also of taste and sentiment in religious matters; which not only extended to all essential points, but even to such as are subordinate and of less consequence. They saw one another frequently; and they found mutual improvement and support in their private communications. The short distance of Hotham, Mr. Stillingfleet's place of residence, from Hull, where Mr. Milner lived, permitted these two to meet and to pass a few days together much oftener than they could do with their more distant friend Mr. Richardson of York; and it was to the unwearied attentions and unexampled kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Stillingfleet, that, by the blessing of God, Mr. Milner's valuable life was preserved so long as it was. At Hotham* his infirmities were nursed with tenderness; the air was excellent; and the conversation

the unsearchable riches of Christ. It was to be expected that the great subjects, which then nearly occupied their whole attention, would furnish abundant materials for interesting conversation. An unreserved and confidential friendship was formed, which was not once interrupted during twenty-four years that Mr. Milner afterwards lived. Amidst the deep regret felt by the survivor, when he dwells upon a loss that can never be repaired, and his profiting so little by the example and communications of this incomparable man, he is thankful for the blessing of such a friend, during so large a portion of his life. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." EDITOR, W. R.

* It was at this hospitable retreat, that Mr. Milner composed a great part of his Church History and other works. In his friend's study he found many of the books which he wished to consult; and was permitted to spend his time there, without interruption, just as he might happen to be disposed. He was quite at home, and felt himself so. Mr. and Mrs. Stillingfleet

of his friend was salutary and refreshing; it was no wonder, therefore, that he always went there with pleasure, and returned with reluctance; or that it should have been constantly observed that his health was improved by these visits. Mr. Stillingfleet was so affected by the loss of Mr. Milner, that he could not prevail upon himself to come to Hull for a long time after that event.

Notwithstanding the distance of York from Hull, Mr. Milner's visits to Mr. Richardson were not unfrequent: and they always proved rich feasts to his mind. He was particularly gratified at York, by being introduced to Mr. Richardson's religious acquaintance: These solid and precious fruits of the Ministry of his beloved Friend, furnished a topic, on which Mr. Milner has often been observed to dwell with singular delight*.

had a particular pleasure in making their house agreeable to him, and they succeeded. They always saw him at their meals, and in the evenings, which were enlivened by his conversation, ever rich in entertainment and instruction.

EDITOR, W.R.

* He found at York a religious society exactly suited to his taste—a people sincerely desirous of living godly in Christ Jesus, without pharisaical singularities, or the cant of a sect—afraid of schism, and content with the means of instruction afforded in the Established Church, without censuring those persons who attended separate places of worship. By them his company was highly prized. Long before the usual school vacations arrived, which enabled him to pay these visits, eager enquiries were made, whether he would come or not. Like Dr. Johnson, his conversation-powers were extraordinary, and the funds which supported them inexhaustible. They seemed to accumulate as he advanced in life; and at his last visit, a few weeks before his death, he exhibited the same vigour of mind, strength of memory, and vivacity of imagination that distinguished his earlier years. He was a general favourite, even with the young children of the family where he visited, who hung upon his lips, when he related to them the legendary

Mr. Milner just lived to receive that very ample and decisive testimony of esteem, which was shown to him by the Mayor and Corporation of Hull, upon the decease of the Rev. Mr. T. Clarke. He was chosen Vicar almost unanimously. But he survived that event only a few weeks. He died Nov. 15, 1797 *.

Never was sorrow more unfeigned or more general among the inhabitants of a large town, than at Hull, on the loss of their pious and faithful Minister. A spirit of mutual condolence pervaded the hearts of the people; numbers expressed their respectful sentiments of the deceased by the change of their external dress; and when the serious Minister adverted to the recent melancholy event in the pulpit, almost every eye bore testimony to

tales which amused his own infancy; and which, like every thing else that he had read, or heard, he never forgot.

EDITOR, W. R.

* In Mr. Stillingfleet's account, his last illness is ascribed to a cold caught in his journey to York, for Institution, in the latter end of September, 1797, and the termination of it is thus related. "The fever being removed, there were hopes of his recovery, till within a very few days of his death, when his worn-out state of body appeared too clear to give the Faculty any ground of hope, or encouragement for his friends. On the day preceding his death, as I have been told, he went through the duties of his family in a very serious and particular manner, intimating, as some concluded from expressions which he used, that his end was probably not far off. Having ended his family-worship, he went to the chamber of his Niece, with whom he lived, and who had lain in only a few days, and after praying with her, and wishing her a good night, retired to his room. At the first he seemed to sleep tolerably easy; but after some time, one of the persons who sat up with him perceived that he was seized with an hiccup, and that he breathed with some difficulty. Soon after the attendant finding all remarkably still, and being rather alarmed, drew near to the bedside, and found that he had indeed breathed his last."

EDITOR, W. R.

the feelings of the heart. Some very remarkable wishes were uttered by profane, worldly, and avaricious persons; "That they would freely give up all their wealth to be where HE now was." For many years past the Clergy of the town of Hull have, in general, been very serious persons, and have lived in harmony with Mr. Milner both in doctrine and in zeal. Some of them have been his pupils both in profane and sacred learning; and all of them looked up to him with reverence as a wise and experienced guide in spiritual things. The affectionate attachment of one of them was so tried by his death, that he could scarcely be induced to desist from mourning over the remains of his friend, or, for some days after, to take necessary refreshments.

Mr. M. bequeathed the greater part of his little property to his niece Sarah, the wife of Mr. Thomas Wilberforce Crompton. His Will begins with these introductory clauses: "I, Joseph Milner, of Kingston upon Hull, make this my last Will and Testament. I commit my soul and body to Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of lost sinners. I am one of those: a fallen spirit, dreadfully guilty and impure in every faculty by nature: and I thank Jesus Christ my Lord that he hath shown me the way of full Salvation through his obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross, to the Glory of God the Father. Hence only, I expect to find God my God through all Eternity; and to be enabled to serve and delight in him as my only portion. My own salvation I expect only in this way, in which I have been enabled to preach to others. I have no works to plead FOR THIS END. If I have been enabled to

perform any that are good, since I was made acquainted with Christ Jesus, they are very poor and imperfect indeed; stained and mixed with much iniquity. What is good in them is the Lord's, and I shall be glad to give him the glory of it; and to have my doing so esteemed an expression of some thankfulness to Him, who saves me freely."

His health had been visibly on the decline for the space of eight or ten years, and had received, about six years before his death, a severe shock by a fever, from the effect of which he never entirely recovered. His near relatives, as well as many of his friends, saw with sorrow the impression which had been made by this disease on his feeble constitution; and the Mayor and Aldermen of Hull were so persuaded of the decline of his strength, and ability to labour, that with a kindness and a consideration which does them great honour, they liberally voted for him the sum of forty pounds a year, in support of an additional Usher of his School. This voluntary mark of the unanimous approbation and esteem of his Patrons, did not fail to produce universal satisfaction in the town.—The inhabitants of Hull were well convinced that their industrious School-master was in no danger of becoming indolent: They saw that he was almost worn out in their service; and they were glad to be informed that now, through the daily assistance of two Ushers, he would experience considerable relief from the wearing employment of teaching school-boys. It is by no means improbable, that he might have lived longer, if, before it had been too late, he could have been induced to lessen sufficiently his exertions, and to guard more effectually against the changes of the

atmosphere: but if lives were to be measured by what men do, rather than by the succession of fleeting moments, his life would be found sufficiently long.

For many years together, till the pressure of infirmities compelled him to diminish his labours, besides his regular duty in the morning at Ferriby, nine miles from Hull, and at Hull on the same Sundays, he also preached in the High Church at Hull, every alternate Wednesday in the forenoon; and on every Thursday in the week he read the prayers, and expounded a portion of Scripture, to a crowded congregation at Lister's hospital. Now, when it is considered that many solid hours were daily taken up, in his school, with a business by no means refreshing to the spirits, it may seem extraordinary, that he could find time, for bodily exercise, for the visitation of the sick, and for private study.

It might be a very useful lesson to careless and dissipated persons, who seem not sensible of the importance of time, to reflect, what a large proportion of Mr. Milner's life may be accounted for, and shown to have been actually spent in virtuous and laudable occupations. He died in his 54th year. During the first twenty-three years of his life, we find him exerting every nerve to acquire knowledge; and during a great part of the last thirty years, he is daily five or six hours in his school: Then, besides his frequent preachings and visitations of the sick, his poetical compositions, and many baskets full of Sermons committed to the flames, on account of the Author's disapprobation of their contents, there are now in existence eight or nine hundred Sermons in manuscript, composed after the Author's sentiments had changed and were fixed. To this

account are to be added many Essays on Religious subjects, yet unpublished; and all his publications, which are well known; particularly the last most important one, "The History of the Church of Christ," which could never have been brought into its present state without much time and thought, or without the consultation and sifting of numerous volumes of the Fathers and other original Writers. If, from these undoubted facts, any judicious person, qualified by his experience to make the proper allowances, should be disposed to indulge his curiosity by computing the requisite portions of time, the Writer is well convinced that his main difficulty would be to find a sufficient number of hours in so short a life for producing so much effect. This difficulty, however, will in a measure be relieved and explained in the minds of those who knew him well, when they recollect that HIS mind was CONSTANTLY AT WORK: that no man who ever lived, perhaps, dissipated fewer moments; that the Scriptures were his constant study, and profane history his amusement; and that the substance and matter of his Sermons were the effect of many days' rumination, in his walks, in his rides; and, not unfrequently, in company, when the conversation did not happen to suit his taste.

The compositions of Mr. Milner, whether already published or yet in manuscript, are most perfectly free from plagiarism. He profited by his immense reading; but neither his thoughts nor his expressions are to be traced in books; unless indeed in the case of some short and pithy favourite sentiment or sentence, which had forcibly struck his mind. He was an original thinker; he had con-

fidence in his own judgment; and he usually acted upon it: Mr. Milner always bends with reverence and submission to the Scriptures, but never to human authority.

It is not to be expected that Sermons written so rapidly; and purely for the purpose of doing good to his Congregations, without the least view to the publication of them, should be very correct. He found time to forge and hammer, but he had none to file and polish *. His Manuscripts are in many instances so crowded and interlined as to be almost unintelligible: Besides, it was his constant practice to insert connecting and explanatory observations, at the time of preaching, according as his feelings and judgment suggested at the moment. It is entirely owing to the exceeding great care and labour of † the Rev. Mr. Richardson, and to his intimate knowledge of the Author and his sentiments, that this Volume‡ is in the respectable condition in which it is now presented to the Public. Any defects, which still remain, it is trusted, will be found not very material; and the reader will have the candour to ascribe them to their true causes, as above related.

The inhabitants of the town of Hull expressed

* Mr. Milner never could be persuaded to bestow that minute attention upon the composition of any of his works that was necessary to make them neat and correct in point of style. He was ever occupied about THINGS, and regardless of WORDS.
EDITOR, W. R.

† The advantageous manner in which an insignificant name is introduced to the public eye, and mentioned in the course of the Narrative, ought not, perhaps, to have been permitted. But LAUDATI A LAUDARO VIRO was too flattering a circumstance to be resisted. He has only altered one expression of too high commendation. EDITOR, W. R.

‡ N.B. This relates to the former edition published under the care of the Rev. W. R.

a great desire to see some of Mr. M.'s Sermons in print, and the Writer felt it incumbent upon him to gratify their wishes. He acts in obedience to this call; but at the same time he judges it entirely expedient not to publish too many at once. Among the vast collection of the Manuscripts of Mr. Milner, there are many striking compositions on Scripture-characters,—some specimens of which are now published:—There are also several official Sermons preached at the election of Mayors, &c.; but whether it will be proper to publish any more of his practical discourses, must depend on several circumstances. This Volume, he doubts not, will be highly acceptable to the affectionate friends of the Author; and he considers it, also, as a trial of the taste of the Public.

All the subjects of practical divinity were well digested in Mr. Milner's mind; but he never chose to be tied down by artificial rules of composition. In delivering his thoughts from the pulpit, he had generally one point in view; and if he sometimes digressed pretty freely, he made his whole design clear before he had done, and returned upon his audience with redoubled force. In the manuscript Sermons there are frequently wanting a few very short connecting sentences to effect and finish the LUCIDUS ORDO; and where these can be supplied successfully, all becomes at once free from embarrassment and obscurity.

There can be nothing ostentatious in observing, that in public institutions and societies of the benevolent stamp, of every description, it may be seen that the Rev. Joseph Milner's subscriptions were very large in proportion to his income: and in re-

gard to his private liberalities, it is not the business of the Writer to trumpet THEM: "His heavenly Father, who seeth in secret, will reward him openly."

There is hardly a more common mistake, than the supposition of dulness and melancholy being necessarily connected with very religious dispositions. Mr. Milner was, throughout life, the farthest possible removed from being a dull companion. We have already observed, that many are alive, who can speak to the sociable turn and cheerfulness of his temper: Nor was this the case only before, but also after that his thoughts were chiefly occupied with religious subjects. He always spent much time in solitude; but he failed not to contribute his full share to the amusement and improvement of the company where he did happen to be present. If, on certain occasions, he appeared uncommonly grave, or not well pleased, it was because something was going forward, which he disapproved—something immoral or profane: Otherwise, before he grew zealous in the cause of true religion, he was generally esteemed one of the most entertaining men of the place in which he lived. His imagination was lively and fruitful; and he had an exquisite sense of the ludicrous. His memory was stored with abundance of curious facts and anecdotes; and his observations on men and things were extremely original and impressive.

The Writer of this Narrative never met with any person who resembled him in two points,—an extreme ignorance of the ways and manners of mankind in their ordinary intercourse with each other,—and, an utter and absolute rejection of disguise in

all its shapes; and these two circumstances, no doubt, contributed much to render his sentiments and reflections singular, simple, and unaffected. To the last, he was a great friend to cheerful society and innocent relaxation; but his serious views of the importance of time, and of the awful account to be given of it, had, for many years, chastised and repressed his disposition to mirth, and rendered him watchful to profit by every favourable opportunity of suggesting some useful advice. Several persons, who knew Mr. Milner only by his preaching, conceived him to be severe and morose; and expressed great surprise and satisfaction afterwards upon finding him so easy, mild, and affable. The fact was this; the nature of God, and of true religion, and of eternal things, and the situation of mankind, were so realized in his vivid conceptions, that in stating these great truths to his Congregations from the pulpit, he often seemed to feel as if the present probationary moments were actually the last they would have; and that if he were not listened to at that time, it might be too late in future. Hence his energetic descriptions of the Miseries of Sin; his awful denunciations against impenitence, and his animated exhortations to lay hold of the inestimable remedy of the Gospel.

There have lived, perhaps, very few men, who appeared so perfectly and so exactly what they really were, as Mr. Milner did: This description is strong, and may possibly be thought unwarranted: It will not be thought so by those who knew him well. Most certainly the Writer never knew any one who was so completely stripped of all disguise. All his likings and dislikings appeared at once: he

practised no temporising measures with any one. He commended and blamed without reserve, and without much consulting the feelings of those who heard him. If he disliked the company in which he happened to be, he soon made it appear how irksome his stay was, and he did not remain there long. Even the ordinary terms of civility in the common intercourse among men, were very sparingly used by him. Whenever he was vexed, or out of humour with any person or thing, it was not in his power to appear easy or cheerful; and when some particular subject had seized his attention, he would repeatedly introduce and dwell on that subject, without any great regard to propriety, or to the different tastes of men. From his father he inherited a hasty and sanguine temper, which sometimes got the better of him for the moment; but when reflection pointed out to him that he had gone too far, he never rested till he had set all right. Such were the failings and infirmities of this good man. The Writer has not the least inclination to throw a veil over them: nor could any thing be more opposite to the ideas of Mr. Milner, if he were alive.

It has already been observed, that Mr. Milner was uncommonly ignorant of the ordinary modes of life: That single circumstance will afford a probable explanation of several of his peculiarities; as it is itself to be ascribed, in a great measure, to his bodily weakness and inactivity during his early years.

Whatever Mr. Milner did, he did with all his might. It was before remarked *, that he was not of a disposition to do things by halves. Greek, Latin, History, and Poetry, chiefly employed the

* See page xliv.

former part of his life: Practical Religion, or subjects connected with it, the latter.

As a disciplinarian in his school, he was sufficiently rigid; yet his scholars, almost without exception, loved and revered him. Several gentlemen, who had been his pupils many years ago, showed a sincere regard for their Instructor, by erecting, at their own expence, an elegant monument to his memory in the High Church of Hull.

The Monument was executed by Mr. Bacon, with the following inscription:

TO THE MEMORY
OF JOSEPH MILNER, M.A.
SUCCESSIVELY LECTURER AND VICAR OF THIS CHURCH,
AND UPWARDS OF 30 YEARS
MASTER OF THE FREE GRAMMAR SCHOOL,
THIS MONUMENT IS ERECTED
BY THE GRATEFUL AFFECTION OF HIS SCHOLARS.

HE WAS A MAN OF A VIGOROUS UNDERSTANDING,
EXTENSIVE LEARNING, AND UNWEARIED DILIGENCE:
DISTINGUISHED BY PRIMITIVE PURITY OF SENTIMENT,
AND HOLINESS OF LIFE.

HE UNIFORMLY PROVED HIMSELF,
THROUGH A LONG AND ACTIVE MINISTRY,
A ZEALOUS CHAMPION OF THE FAITH OF
CHRIST;
WHICH HIS LABOURS SUCCESSFULLY INCULCATED,
AND HIS WRITINGS WILL EXHIBIT AND VINDICATE
TO FUTURE GENERATIONS.

HE DIED
ON THE 15th OF NOVEMBER, 1797,
IN THE 54th YEAR OF HIS AGE.

Very soon after the publication of the first edition of this volume of Sermons, the Writer of this Narrative received an anonymous letter, containing the following very elegant composition.—He has since discovered, that it was written by a worthy Clergyman, of great erudition, zeal, and piety, who had not the least acquaintance with Mr. M. The anonymous note contains the following words, "The writer of this Inscription was warmed by the perusal of Dr. Milner's two performances,—The Life of the Rev. Joseph Milner, and the Preface to the 2d Edition of the third Volume of the History of Christ,—and gave this utterance to his feelings."

SISTE LECTOR,
ET VIRTUTES CHRISTIANAS CONTEMPLARE
JOSEPHI MILNER, A. M.
VIR FUIT INGENIO SINGULARI,
DOCTRINA, PIETATE, MORUM INNOCENTIA,
VITÆ SIMPLICITATE, CONTINENTIA, INDUSTRIA
SPECTATISSIMUS:
IN DOCENDO, IN CONCIONANDO, IN SACRO OFFICIO
EXEQUENDO,
IMPIGER, ATQUE INCORRUPTUS:
IN RELIGIONE SINE FUCO EXORNANDA, SINE METU
ASSERENDA,
SINE AMBAGIBUS DEMONSTRANDA,
POTENS, LUCULENTUS, INTEGERRIMUS:
NOVÆ ECCLESIASTICÆ HISTORIÆ SCRIPTOR,
IN QUA QUANTUM CHRISTI GRATIA
IN PIORUM ANIMOS DIVINITUS EFFUSA
CONTRA OMNES ADVERSARIORUM INSIDIAS, IRAS,
IMPETUS,
ARROGANTIAM, DOMINATIONEM,

VICTRIX EVASERIT ET SEMPER EVASURA SIT,
EX UNDIQUE INVESTIGATIS ANNALIUM MONUMENTIS
CONQUISIVIT, EXPRESSIT, VINDICAVIT.
EVANGELICI AMORIS, VERITATIS AC FIDEI,
QUÆ ADEO FORTITER, ADEO FELICITER DEFENDERAT,
VIVA INDICIA
EXEMPLO SUO COMPROBAVIT.
IN MEDIO OPERUM CURSU,
REBUS ARDUIS OB DEI GLORIAM GERUNDIS
NEC IMPAREM, NEC DEFATIGATUM,
NEC SUIS CONFISUM VIRIBUS,
ABRIPUIT MORS
OMNIBUS BONIS PRÆTER SE ACERBISSIMA,
ANN. DOM. 1797. ÆT. LIIII.
HANC TABULAM
IN TANTI VIRI MEMORIAM
QUEM VIVUM AMORE PLUSQUAM FRATERNO DILEXIT,
QUEM MORTUUM DESIDERIO ET MENTE GRATISSIMA
PROSEQUITUR,
PONI CURAVIT
ISAACUS MILNER,
FRATER SUPERSTES
SPE
CONJUNCTIONIS FUTURÆ IN CŒLO PER CHRISTUM
INDIVIDUÆ, SANCTISSIMÆ, BEATISSIMÆ,
SEMPITERNÆ.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

MANY excellent Christians have judged it expedient to keep a regular sort of religious journal; in which they were accustomed to note the different thoughts and frames of their minds at different times.—The practice, however, is far from universal; and there has, also, existed some difference of opinion respecting its utility.

Does it really make a man more diligent and watchful against his spiritual enemies; or does it not rather tend to promote formality, and self-deception?

At present it is not so much the Writer's business to enter into these questions, as to inform his reader, that Mr. Milner was in the habit of steering a sort of middle course between recording all, and none, of his religious reflections. He put down, from time to time, striking thoughts and remarkable parts of his experience; but, he kept no account of his ordinary meditations, or of such daily variations of his views, feelings, and temper, as are common to every truly good Christian.

There have arisen in the Writer's mind very serious doubts, respecting the propriety of publishing ANY private memorandums of this kind; and among those doubts, this is one;

Is such a step fair to the Deceased?

The result of a very attentive consideration has been,—to select and print a few of the memorandums; and, in selecting, to take SUCH, as tend

most to lay open the internal state of Mr. M.'s mind, and, at the same time, are likely to prove useful to pious persons in general.

To give the precise dates, has been judged unnecessary.—But the Editor thought it might be convenient to place a numerical figure to each observation, or collection of observations, and then to divide the numbers into classes. He has made the first class consist of nine numbers, and placed the words, Earnest prayer and Self-examination, as the title and description of that class.

Selected from papers written in 1775, 1776, &c. &c.

Earnest prayer, and Self-examination.

1. All glory to God, reconciled unto the world in Christ?—I would look unto him as my God, and only hope of eternal happiness!

I prayed, that the recording of any of my private thoughts might always be a spiritual, not a carnal work.

2. This morning I begin with views of myself, and of my state, thus.—Very confused. A long atheistic gloom, with raging enmity against Divine Justice. Such thoughts of God harden the heart.

I take it there is in my temper a deal of pride; an uncommon quantity of it.—Strong, self-righteous habits: Yet, if one so tempted and darkened as I am, one so much discouraged at times, and often so dead, and worldly minded, can form a judgment, I am determined, through grace, to FOLLOW on, to know the Lord, till I find his going forth prepared as the morning*; . . . . . I am

* Hosea. vi. 3.

determined to ALLOW no self-confidence; but to venture on Christ alone for acceptance; though clearer in my mind about his BLOOD, than his Righteousness.

3. A very steady Christian——, much and long in fear, found the Comforter in dying—N.B. Trust: Wait: Bear: Expect.

4. Very dark; and much tempted: feel earthliness more and more; and need a sight of the NATURE of true happiness:——Some useful hints from Rom. xv. 13 & 14, and Philip. iii. Oh! thankfully acknowledge them, as received from the Lord.

5. Ill tempers, and a wandering mind, are obstinate evils: they need watching and prayer:—but, unbelief about the very fundamentals of religion, of true goodness, and of happiness, strikes at the root of all hope: This is a sore evil indeed.

6. In great trouble of mind: But I find on many occasions of late, that a look at Christ, as the true Saviour, has been attended with deliverance in urgent temptations. Against hope, to believe in hope*—how this does suit my vastly dark, dead, imprisoned state!!

Pity, Lord, and teach me real faith! Let not my trouble seem little, O Lord!

7. Though outwardly restrained, yet inwardly repining.——On the whole, however, I trust, Gospel-hope does not sink: I much need a DISTINGUISHING SIGHT of Gospel-Truths; otherwise sloth and carnal indulgence cramp me in my ministry: By these things I have grieved God's

* Rom. iv. 18.

Spirit of late.—I thank God, however, for Christ: The battle is not lost;—I am yet in the field.

8. Blessed be God! I found these four things, in spite of millions of vile, blasphemous, reasonings. —1. Christ is true goodness, and happiness must be in goodness: The Bible breathes goodness throughout.—2. Myself am all vileness, and I feel so. I have no good: If a little be put into me, 'tis Christ's, not mine.—3. Neither did I deserve mercy more than any other; not so much as many; therefore I must be saved by grace.—4. I feel Isaiah xlvi. 13.

9. Laid before the Lord, this day, with prayer, my evils in the following order:—1. Atheism, blasphemy, and a disposition to cast off all thought of happiness in God.—2. Temptation to barren Orthodoxy *.—3. Temptation to desperation.—4. Temptation to self-righteousness, and to scrupulosities.—5. Temptation to carnal indulgencies:—Sore evils all and stubborn.

Expect deliverance in Christ alone, the Lord, my righteousness and my portion: expect FULL relief: wait for answers, in confident patience from him.

Marks of some progress in true religion. Among others, a most conscientious attention to the discharge of professional duties.

10. By experience I find that difficulties really left with the Lord, that is, committed to him in humble faith, do vanish.—O, for a whole life of faith!

* These words denote a species of orthodoxy, which is unfruitful in spiritual affections; and is merely speculative. See page xxxvi, for some account of it.

11. In sore distress, through long hidings of the face of the Lord, and through stubborn corruptions; begged for particular direction as to duty.

12. I find the Lord hears prayer in trouble; but I sadly forget to treasure the instances of this, with thankfulness.—Found great mercies at —— this Christmas: was preserved from evils, which I had feared and prayed against: but I am sadly unmindful of answers to prayer.

13. Bad tempers prevail.—The Lord forgive me, and humble me on this account!

14. Terrifying temptations!—When I am careless, my soul tends to Atheism;—When earnest, to desperation.—Still the Lord gives hope, by promising to lead the blind*.—Mine enemy does not triumph over me.—I find the spirit of supplication at times pretty strong.—Hence hope—Blessed be God!

15. Usual evils—Usual supports.—Blessed be God; I am never contented without Christ's righteousness; and AM ALWAYS SUPPORTED IN DUTIES.—I cry for deliverance: and am answered with encouraging views of Christ.

16. Various crosses confound me: I sin through impatience. I find impatience, and even anger in my professional duties, where I ought to be all tenderness: There is very suitable instruction in Heb. xii.

17. Evening of the same day.—Still,—thank God,—the day has not passed without some cheering and calming thoughts; and, as far as I can find, all the little real comfort I have, is from viewing

* Isai. xlii. 16.

Christ as my High Priest, and Surety, . . . —He must, I think, support me, or I should sink. Do not I keep the field still through him, though hard pressed? Is not this the earnest of victory?

18. I find myself wanting in that emphasis of conviction of condemnation by the law, and of righteousness by the gospel, which good men have. —The tempter succeeds often in preventing me from laying hold of the Redeemer; but not often in hindering me from longing after him.

19. Ruffled to-day by some opposition for the Gospel-sake.—After prayer, the Lord in mercy calmed my soul.

20. Have prayed fervently for many days, for DIRECTION.—At length, I seem to hear the voice of gracious answers, "Christ is free for thy use, and Christ alone is thy happiness."—"Thou art in great darkness, but follow me; and thou shalt not remain in it: thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall set thee free."—Saviour! grant that I may not remain contentedly short of this!—Amen.

21. I find both some consolatory reliefs, and also several sad proofs of corruptions.—I should PRESS toward "the MARK," more than I do.

22. I hurt myself by anxious anticipations instead of waiting on the Lord, and expecting him to be with me in times of trial.

23. Strivings, without exalting God in Christ, are vain.

24. Oh! What a restless day—Bad tempers—impatience, &c. When God hides his face, how hard it is to trust and endure! I am solicited con-

tinually to seek relief from wrong remedies.—Thank God, the enemy prevails not: I was enabled to pray again.—I have abundant reason to thank God, when I compare his dealings with me and others. It must be all mercy and grace toward me. My tempers are as strongly against the genius of the Gospel as any man's whatever.

25. I experienced this day horrible temptations. —Have prayed concerning them: The Lord give me patient faith to wait for answers!

26. Thank God—for abatement of the temptations—have had many answers to prayers lately—The Lord* leadeth the blind by ways they knew not; but oh! how dangerous to trifle with sin. It must be resisted at first. Afterward it costs one dear. When shall I learn the true practical rule in this matter?

27. Again helped in difficulties in the time of action.—Still found support in trials.—Evils dreaded at a distance again removed in time of action.

28. Dull in my own mind;—yet enabled to speak to others. Oh! Lord, realize to my own soul the glorious and precious promises of thy word, which thou enablest me to set forth so forcibly to others. Amen. Amen.

29. To-day, while I was talking to my people, and sometime after, I thought I had some little of genuine spiritual affections:—I could soon doubt—but, I take notice of the least loving kindness of this sort as an earnest of more.

30. Let me pray for the people in private as well as in public; and condescend to teach them the

* Isai. xlii. 16.

FIRST things repeatedly;—Adapt myself to their understandings, and have PATIENCE with them.—I ought to be more diligent in pressing relative duties upon the minds of the people.—Let me, in catechising children, be careful to give them such little instances of corrupted nature, as they can understand.

31. Let me, in private, review and consider attentively our Ordination Service.

32. As we are in private, so are we.—May I, in my private meditations and prayers, have the work of my ministry more and more at heart!—Success, of late, in visiting the sick, should encourage me to be more diligent in that part of my duty.—A mere formalist,—but one who held true doctrine,—being spurred, during his illness, to examine what power there was in his religion, and what fruits from it, prayed incessantly for light, and continued as hard as a stone for a long time; but there is great reason to hope he was at last savingly softened.

Proofs of a progress in Self-knowledge, and in Spiritual wisdom.

33. Is not my refusing to mortify sins, the reason I make so little progress in the spiritual life?——A very serious question! Yet, all things considered, perhaps,—I have more Evangelical clearness; and, perhaps, some spiritual enemies have less power to hurt me,—than was the case three months ago*.

* Here the Author refers to memorandums which cannot be found.

34. The same evils. Long, sad, darkness.—I begged, if the long wanted light and comfort be withheld for unmortified sin, to be shown it ENERGETICALLY; if for sovereign reasons to be made resigned.

35. I find I look for perfection in faith as my righteousness and rest, instead of looking for the righteousness of Christ himself. My heart betrays me here, against my judgment.

36. A constant struggle between slothfulness of the flesh, and sense of duty.—It seems as if God aimed at making me resigned under his hand,—and willing to bear the cross with a patient view of happiness hereafter. I am not content with this; I oppose God,—I am for present gratification. Lord teach me the art of contentment.—Found some help against proud reasonings from Butler's Analogy.—Thank God!

37. A sight of God in his real goodness overcomes self-righteousness, and gives confidence towards him.—Humility and joy produce holiness of life.

38. The witness of the Spirit is one thing,—to know it another.—The Spirit of God witnesses with our Spirit when we have faith, hope, peace, joy, love, &c. we FIND HIM witnessing thus, when we know this is the case.

39. Oh! when shall I submit to the righteousness of God? I hope, that the mortification which my pride endures will be blessed by the Lord in due time.

40. I have all my life been ensnared by leaning to my own understanding. Early in life, when under convictions of sin, I was always reasoning myself out of evils instead of waiting on the Lord

for deliverance in prayer, faith, and patience. On a slight view or notion of the Gospel I presently began to work myself into peace by presumptuous reasoning, without the Spirit, or any dependance on him. Afterward I reasoned myself out of the doctrine of Justification by Faith*. Oh! how strong has this propensity, to trust my own reasoning powers, grown since! When, in mercy,—as I hope, —I was again visited by God's Spirit, I resisted in this same way, and have always gone on thus. Is it not on this account that I am kept so dark, and so buffeted? Does not this self-dependance still stick close to me, though in a Gospel-dress? Do I not selfishly work myself into peace, without the Spirit; instead of waiting till the Lord speak? How little have I of this waiting on God! Do I not by acting thus renounce Christ as my Prophet? I seem to feel very little of my own helplessness here.

41. Oh how have I been relieved, where I least expected relief.—Best,—to be as a weaned child.—I want boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus.

42. Much mercy to-day.—Prayed that the Sacrament might prove to me a gracious banquet: and that Christ's banner over me might be love†.—Found at the close of the Communion a sort of determined faith. A foolish scruple notwithstanding fettered me for many hours after.—Prayed for SATISFYING light—and for STRENGTH TO SIT STILL.

43. At last I see many reasons for believing, and trusting patiently and confidently my soul in the hands of Christ.—I found this faith particularly in

* N.B. this agrees with the Rev. Mr. R.'s note, page xx.
† Cant. ii. 4.

the Communion: and had Liberty of prayer afterward.—Vehement desires after Christ—with exquisite sense of the misery of my natural state. I am enabled to look at Christ as precious and suitable.—Yet by and by dead, as though these desires had never existed.—Prayed again: encouraged from James i. ASK WISDOM.

44. I find four things lately:—1. A distincter sight of the cause of my enmity against the Divine Justice: I need a sight of the goodness of God—and of the evil of sin. This will be the cure of self-righteousness, of unbelief, and of enmity.—2. The importance of casting care on God. I have been sadly wanting here. May experience make me wise.—3. Patience is of prodigious moment, till God do his will with me.—4. FOLLOW ON.—There is a promise that I shall not walk in darkness.—Be more earnest in prayer for patience to bear burdens, than for the removal of them,—till the ends be answered.—Be determined in conduct without surliness: Others speak more humbly of themselves than I do.

45. I find, blessed be God, more and more pressing after Christ:—but I am vehemently opposed, by temptations, when I would boldly lay hold of the precious truths.

IT can scarcely be necessary to put the serious reader in mind, that in perusing these last few pages, he has not been merely looking over certain private observations of Mr. M.—He has, in effect, entered

his closet, has seen him prostrate before God, and has watched the genuine effusions of his soul.—In the present state of our existence and capacity of mutual communication, it is, perhaps, impossible, under any circumstances, to penetrate more effectually, or with greater certainty, the secret recesses of the human heart, than by reading memorandums of this nature.

It may not, however, be improper to add, that an inspection of the original papers on which the memorandums are written, would, in this instance, tend very much to satisfy any thinking person, that he was most completely in possession of the actual thoughts of their Author. When we are presented with a regular Diary of private meditations, the internal evidence of piety and good sense is not usually found sufficient to convince us of the perfect integrity of the writer. We require some information concerning his general character, before we can entirely dismiss every suspicion of art and deceit, of vanity and ostentation; and even when these doubts are removed, still the subtle efficacy of self-imposition will often occur to us, as, possibly, being the principal cause of the productions in question.

Nevertheless, such suspicions, one would think can hardly be entertained for a moment, when the thoughts are found written on small fragments of paper, of different sizes; and these so mutilated or unfinished, as in several places to be utterly illegible; and when it is not going too far to say, that many of the papers, now alluded to, have such an appearance, or contain such heterogeneous matter, that scarcely any one, who was not, in

some measure, aware of their origin, would think them worthy of preservation, or of the least notice*.

On the other hand, it is by no means impossible, that some persons,—not well versed in the history of the internal experience of true Christians,—may be disposed to see this matter in a very different light, and be ready enough to acquit Mr. M. of ever having had the smallest intention of courting the applause of posterity through the medium of his private memorandums. They may rather think that his surviving friends would have consulted his reputation much better by stifling the contents of such secret registers, than by thus publishing them, and proclaiming the weakness and even the wickedness of human nature. What is the cause, they may be inclined to ask, of all this mourning under a sense of sin? What mean this uncomfortable darkness of mind, and all these dreadful temptations?

Moreover, one may observe, that even deep and humble confessions of sin, and the determined rejection of all positive merit in a fallen creature, often prove very offensive to mere formalists in religion, or to men of a Deistical or Socinian stamp,

* The Editor, in printing Mr. M.'s private thoughts, has given the precise words, wherever they would be intelligible to readers in general; and he has always adhered strictly to the sense. The author on these occasions frequently made use of marks of abbreviation, and sometimes of very significant Greek words. Several of his Sermons also appear to have been carried about in his pocket; and to contain private thoughts, expressed very concisely, and in very small letters crowded between the lines. The subject-matter of the Sermons often points out the meaning of the memorandums.

and are by them declared to be perfectly incomprehensible to their understandings.—According to such persons all notions or feelings of this kind originate in hypocrisy or affectation,—or at best in ignorance,—degrade human nature, are injurious to good principles, and destructive of virtuous exertion. They frequently go farther, and assert, —that they positively FEEL THEMSELVES inclined to what is good; and that, abating some slight infirmities or imperfections, they are always conscious of virtuous dispositions. For all the world they would not give up this full persuasion of their good qualities: They pride themselves in it; and look on it as their best protection against temptation, the most powerful support of the dignity of their nature, and their most efficacious motive to good actions.

Let no person, whose ideas of the Gospel of Christ lead him to make reflections like these, be offended when he is told that, as yet, he is neither acquainted with the evil of his own heart, nor understands the dealings of the Spirit of God in the conversion of a sinner.

Why does Mr. M. so bitterly lament the strength of his corruptions, the difficulty of resisting temptations, and the obstinacy of perverse and unruly tempers?

Because he has an entire hatred of sin, and an exquisite sensibility in perceiving its motions; and because he hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

Rarely does sin break out EXTERNALLY in the conduct of truly converted men. At the very time

that they are self-abased, and abhor themselves in dust and ashes, they are walking not after the flesh, but the Spirit: Sin has not dominion over them.—Their anguish of soul arises from internal conflicts CHIEFLY: Through grace, such men have begun to have a real love for holiness: Corrupt nature, however, though restrained, is not subdued: Satan tempts; and difficulties increase. These young converts, these babes in Christ*, do not yet know, that out of weakness they are to be made strong: In great mercy, and for the purpose of teaching them their utter helplessness, a gracious God hides his face: They are discontented, they murmur, they struggle, they are on the brink of despair.—All this retards the progress of conversion. At length they submit, and are thoroughly humbled: At length, like Job, they acknowledge themselves to be vile; they lay their hands on their mouth: they receive salvation as a free gift: they are filled with gratitude: they experience a happiness they never knew before; and they serve God in newness of life.—To serious inquirers, the history of the dealings of Almighty God, in the conversion of sinners in all ages, affords most instructive lessons.

If Pharisaical men of the world, would dispassionately study such lessons, and endeavour thoroughly to understand them, by comparing them with the Scripture account of the same important matters, they would soon see less difficulty and inconsistency in the unfeigned humility and bitter mourning of awakened sinners. They would no longer impute these truly christian affections to

* 1 Cor. iii. 2.

ignorance, affectation, or hypocrisy.—In one word, they might be led to a salutary examination of their own hearts.

But,—How comes it to pass that THEY themselves have no internal conflicts like those above described;—that THEY neither "labour nor are heavy laden," nor, in any respect, are troubled in their consciences with a sense of guilt?

Is it not that such men, even where they confess the existence of sin, have slight notions of the evil of it? Is it not that they are accustomed to judge of virtue or holiness,—if indeed they ever do use the latter Scripture-term,—by a very low and erroneous standard? In regard to sins of the heart, do they not usually maintain that there can be little or no harm in evil thoughts, provided reason, as they call it, be but powerful enough to restrain men from carrying such thoughts into execution? Do not they sometimes speak still plainer, and say, that bad thoughts give them no more concern than dreams do, which happen during the time of sleep? Whoever hears THEM complain of the continual risings of their corruptions; or, in general, of the miserable bondage of their depraved nature? The turbulence of the passions, and the strength of temptations, may perhaps be sometimes mentioned:—but rarely are these subjects brought forward for any other purpose than that of self-commendation, or of excusing irregular conduct. If the outward actions happen to have been faultless, then it is thought proper to exhibit the violent passions and temptations, which stood in the way, as so many trophies of victory: They are remembered, not with grief and humilia-

tion, but with pride and triumph.—And, even on the supposition, that any thing hath actually been done, which in strictness cannot be defended, still the great strength of vicious motives furnishes the vanquished with matter for mitigation and apology, and effectually removes from the conscience all sense of guilt or disgrace.—"The passions are necessary parts of our constitution; and unavoidably they will, now and then, transgress the limits prescribed by reason. What mortal can on all occasions subdue his resentments, regulate his pleasures, and restrain his ambition?"

It deserves particular notice, that persons, who are in the habit of talking in this manner, always use every possible effort to acquit their consciences of guilt,—of blame,—of the sense of having done any thing materially wrong. The internal struggles of which they are conscious, they consider as coming under the description of contests between reason and passion, that is, contests between fair and honourable enemies. The pagan philosophers of old did the very same.—Such NOTIONS tend to puff up the human heart with pride and self complacency; and wherever they take full possession of the mind, Christian humility and all its genuine effusions, all the secret mournings of contrite sinners, on account of indwelling sin, become objects of astonishment, or of contempt and derision.

It cannot well be otherwise: These NOTIONS have not been learned from the Bible. "My son, give me thine heart." "Thou requirest truth in the inward parts:" "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth:"—This is the language of Scripture. Nor let the serious reader for-

get, who it is, that, in his Sermon in the mount*, speaks concerning the regulation of the inmost thoughts, and the restraining of sins of the heart, in the most distinct and peremptory language, and with an authority not to be questioned.—We are not to wonder then, that anti-christian consequences should be closely connected with anti-christian principles.

These observations and reflections seem naturally to arise from the consideration of the sentiments contained in Mr. M.'s private thoughts, and they also lead to the discussion of certain subjects in divinity of great moment; but as the Editor does not conceive himself now at liberty to prosecute those subjects at length, he trusts there can be no impropriety in referring the well-disposed reader for a further elucidation of some of the points, here only slightly touched upon, to an instructive Preface, which the Rev. Mr. Richardson, by and by, in his note, informs us was written jointly by himself, and his friend Mr. Milner.

It seems natural to expect that the private memorandums made by Mr. M. on the particular state of his mind, during the last ten or twelve years of his life, should run in a somewhat different strain from those, which he recorded in the more early years of his religious impressions. Some of those now printed go down to about the year 1784, or 1785; and it is very true, that in the succeeding years, there seems, in general, and on the whole, to have been a more composed and abiding sense of the presence of the Comforter than formerly,—yet the constitutional evils of this good man appear

* Matt. v.

to have stuck closer to him than might have been supposed probable, and to have constantly hindered him from enjoying the triumphs of faith for any considerable time together.—

The reader might, perhaps, think it tedious to peruse more of the religious hints and memorandums, and may be better pleased to have the little further information, which the Editor has to produce, conveyed through a few summary observations, in as concise a manner as possible.

Those, who know something of the secret, internal experience of good men in their religious concerns, cannot fail to have observed, as they went through the private thoughts of Mr. M. a very decided progress in the various fruits and graces of Christianity: but, no words can possibly express that tenderness of conscience which gave rise to many of the stronger expressions.

In reviewing his own conduct during the first part of his religious course, the most trivial neglects, and the slightest excesses or irregularities, hung heavy on the mind of Mr. M. for many days together; nor has the Editor the smallest doubt, but that several of the Author's severe accusations of himself, which are now in the possession of the public, originated in circumstances so minute, and, in the judgment of most persons, so unworthy of notice, that the effects produced would be deemed perfectly astonishing, and perhaps incredible.—The Editor reasons from analogy in this matter: In a great many instances, which he actually saw, the tender conscience of this scrupulous convert was affected, by what are usually called little things, in a manner perfectly agreeable to what is here stated.

In the first years of Mr. M.'s conversion, his brother Isaac, the writer of these pages, had abundant opportunities of observing him. He was his assistant in his School at Hull, during the greater part of the day; and in the evenings he lived with him in the same chamber. Even in the hours of the night he has often heard him praying, or reasoning to himself with great earnestness, concerning the Evangelical principles which at that time were so near his heart.

The Editor forbears to relate minutely the particulars of some circumstances, because though, by pious and devout persons, they would certainly be thought curious and instructive, yet, by others, they might possibly be condemned as superfluous, or over-scrupulous, and even the publication of them be judged to border on vanity and ostentation.—To exercise excessive candour in passing sentence on the conduct of very religious characters, is not the fault of the present age.

Those, who had opportunities of observing Mr. Milner with sufficient accuracy during the last eight or ten years of his life, saw, and acknowledged how the affections of this faithful servant of God very sensibly ripened.

1. He himself, as we have already observed, seems to have been conscious of a more steady, active, and abiding presence of God's Spirit.—His thankfulness on this account, as well as his modesty and diffidence in expressing his feelings, are remarkable.

2. The besetting sins of Mr. Milner, were a natural impatience and hastiness of temper, and a disposition to self-righteousness. The former was suffi-

ciently observable at times, even in his most improved state. But in regard to the latter, we are entirely indebted for our knowledge of it to himself. The writer knows of nothing that appeared, from which it might be collected that self-righteousness was a peculiar failing of Mr. M.'s constitution. His greatest enemies never charged him with any thing of that sort; neither in his outward deportment was there the smallest degree of ostentation. The self-righteous spirit, therefore, must have been completely internal, as doubtless, Mr. M.'s bitter griefs and mournings on that account originated in his profound sense of the duty of humility and self-abasement. He well knew that nothing could be more opposite to the genius of the Gospel, than the temper, of which he so much complained; and those, who are acquainted with the dealings of God, in the edification of the new creature, will not think that Mr. M.'s deep knowledge of himself in this respect, is any argument against his progress in true holiness.

3. There is nothing in Mr. M.'s complaints respecting his own private faults or infirmities, which so much surprises the writer of this narrative, as his frequent lamentation of a tendency to SLOTHFULNESS. When Mr. M. repeatedly persists in accusing himself of a disposition to self-righteousness, the writer is not inclined to contest that point, because the author, who wrote immediately from his own feelings, was most probably the best judge of an internal matter of that kind: Add to this, he had a most awful sense of the holiness of God, and also a thorough insight into the depravity of human nature: And these two sentiments, when they are

strong and united, hardly ever fail to excite faithful self-examination, and earnest desire of detecting every species of internal pride.—But,—in regard to the imputation of slothfulness, his own brother Dr. M., who watched his conduct so long, and so narrowly, cannot but think that he has good grounds for suspecting his near relative to have been mistaken in his judgment. At least, if a comparison with others ought to have any weight on a subject of this nature, Mr. M. was certainly, by far, and without exception, the most uniformly diligent person, which his brother ever knew. It ought, however, to be observed, that when Mr. M. accuses himself of sloth, his eye seems to be always on his ministerial functions; and, on these occasions, he appears to have measured his notions of duty, rather by the deplorable wants of a numerous body of uninstructed people, than by his own strength and opportunities to supply them.—

4. But whether the writer's judgment on these points, be, or be not erroneous; it is certain, that all the faults or failings of Mr. M. gradually sunk under the prevailing influence of his religious principles.—They were never entirely subdued; but it was very evident to all that knew him, that they had less dominion over him.

In several particulars that may be mentioned, his improvement in spiritual things, both as a private Christian, and as a public teacher, was obvious and striking.

His regard for the eternal safety of the souls of men could hardly admit of increase, from the time that he first began to consider religion as his proper business; but in the wisdom and in the

patience necessary for instructing them, he made large advances.

He also greatly improved in what he used to call the art of SITTING STILL. A very different thing, however, this, from slothfulness.—In his former years of religious experience, it seemed, on some occasions,—almost, as if he wished to be trying his strength,—almost, as if he was seeking temptations and was desirous of encountering them: he wanted to be satisfied that his heart was right with God: he could not rest with doubts on his mind: And then, if he failed in the trial, he was disconcerted, vexed, and troubled for a long time.—Afterward he learnt to ascribe much of this restless and impetuous temper to the secret influence of that same self-righteous spirit which gave him such continual uneasiness. And he, probably, judged right. At bottom, he would say, I am fighting for my own independence, though I make use of Gospel-weapons: How artful is Satan! I am ardent for victory, but I am tired of fighting. I wish the contest between the flesh and the Spirit to be over; whereas, continued he, Christ's faithful soldiers, while they live in this world, are always to expect fresh intrusions of the enemy; they are ever to stand on the watch, and when called forth, they are to fight manfully; but their entire dependance is to be on their Commander.

Mr. M. lived to see the duty of avoiding unnecessary temptations in a much stronger light than he had done before; and, along with this considerable alteration for the better, he acquired much higher notions of a kind, superintending, watchful Providence, and much greater confidence that the

Lord would not suffer his servants to be tempted above that they are able, but that with the temptation he would make a way to escape, that they might be able to bear it*.—" But then they were not rashly to seek temptations, or run headlong into them on purpose."

On his elevation to the vicarage of Hull, he expressed himself to his friends, by letters, or conversation, in substance as follows. " I know not whether on this change, I ought more to rejoice, or to fear. In regard to the people, I have long had every opportunity I could wish, of doing them good through the means of Gospel-instruction; and I am not sure that my new situation will be favourable to the better removing of their prejudices, or to my own living more closely with Christ.—An increase of income has no charms for me; and indeed in one point of view, the living of Hull is much too small for the situation. A minister must be liberal: A vicar is supposed rich of course; and much is expected from him. The people are often very unreasonable in this matter, nevertheless their prejudices must be consulted, if we mean to do them good. Then I am successor to a gentleman who was very liberal, and had larger means of being so than I shall have.

My apprehensions also are not slight, lest by being necessarily drawn into company of a higher description, than that to which I have long been accustomed, I may be less faithful than I ought to be both in words and actions. The grand Spiritual Enemy is on the watch, and is very dexterous in laying snares. I may be entangled before I am aware.

* 1 Cor. x. 13.

Often I must be either silent, and appear sullen, or, I must say disagreeable things;—and, in either way, I may be supposed to offend against the rules of modern good breeding. These rules strictly forbid one ever to say a plain, disagreeable truth to a man's face; but they are not so rigidly adhered to among the middling or lower classes of people."

The Writer of the Narrative, during the very severe illness, from the effects of which Mr. M. never recovered, was himself, both in too weak a state of bodily health, and also in too deep mental affliction, to see much of his near relative, or to have much conversation with him. The little, however, which did pass between them deserves to be remembered.

Whenever the questions were directly put to Mr. M. respecting his prospects of eternity, no more could scarcely ever be drawn from him on that head than, "I CAN'T SAY MUCH: I rely on the promises for strength in time of need: Most probably my dissolution is at no great distance, but, I do not consider myself in IMMEDIATE danger of dying. There was a time, when I should have been very unhappy to have had so little of sensible comfort; but, I have seen reason to believe that one of the most acceptable exercises of true Christian faith consists in patiently waiting God's time, and in relying confidently on the written Word. For many years, I have been endeavouring to live from day to day as a pensioner on God's bounty. I learn to trust him; and he sends the MANNA without fail."

All this was most evidently the effect of grace: It was all directly contrary to Mr. M.'s natural dispositions.—What a striking example was this

zealous Preacher of the lessons, which, during a large portion of his life, he had been teaching his congregations!!

Not only the near relatives of Mr. M. but also many other persons in the town of Hull, prayed fervently for the continuance of his life. His brother, the Writer of these pages, was so overwhelmed with grief on the occasion of Mr. M.'s increasing distemper, that he could no longer support an interview with him. In deep distress both of mind and body, he at length ventured to write several concise notes to the following effect.—I wish, Dear Brother, you could be induced to think it not improper to offer up earnest petitions to the Almighty, that your own valuable life might be spared a little longer to the inhabitants of Hull, who are all mourning on your account, but more especially to your disconsolate brother, who is himself exceedingly ill, and totally unfit to support the heaviest affliction that can befal him. God will hear YOUR prayers. I would quote James v. 16, and several other Scriptures, but that I distrust my own judgment in a case where I am so much interested. I dare not press you in this matter; as I would not, for the world, be the cause of a moment's anxiety, that might hurt you in your present feeble state.——Your's, &c.

Never can the Writer forget with what earnestness and strength of mind, Mr. M. endeavoured to set his afflicted Brother right on this point, and how energetically he argued the inconsistency of a man, who for many years together, should pretend to long after the Redeemer's company in a state of holiness and felicity; and then all at once, upon a prospect of being favoured with the completion of his wishes, should discover an eagerness and an

anxiety to continue in this present world of sin and sorrow*.

By replies of this kind, Dr. Isaac M. was almost struck dumb. He became in a measure composed, and said, "God's will be done." A secret satisfaction and astonishment seized his mind, upon seeing the principles of Grace correspond so excellently with the practice of his Brother. At last he cried out, "So this is the man, who, when he is asked directly about his prospects in eternity, can give no other answer, but I can't say much."

His composure, however, was of no long duration; his spirits were weak; and every day brought him very indifferent accounts of Mr. M.'s health. Dr. M. once more in writing, briefly besought his Brother to teach him, as his last kindness, some lessons of RESIGNATION, a Christian grace, in which he found himself miserably deficient. This request was soon followed by a very judicious and affecting letter, which is here given word for word, except a single half sentence of a nature perfectly private.

"Dear Brother,

"Resignation to the Divine Will is one of the last and highest attainments of the Christian life. It is what is ultimately to be aimed at, as essential to comfort here and happiness hereafter. But it seems not by any means to be the first object of one who is desirous of becoming a Christian; nor even attainable, except some other necessary things are previously acquired. For me to have my will in unison with the will of God, I must, in the first

* N. B. This was said in conversation.—Mr. M. had particularly expressed a wish to see his brother Isaac.

place, trust him thoroughly, and love him supremely. For it is impossible for me, freely to give up my will to another entirely, while we are on bad terms; that is, so long as I cannot trust him, and so long as I hate him, or, what in this case comes to the same thing, love any person or any thing better than him. The conclusion is, all attempts at resignation will be vain, without any conversion and reconciliation with God. When we are convinced of the sinfulness and misery of our natural state, it is a high point of wisdom to seek, by prayer and diligent searching of the Scriptures, that only right and effectual method of relief which God has provided. "Repent and believe the Gospel," is the first thing. We should not stir from this direction, till we have some good ground of evidence, that we do repent and believe. Alas! our guilt and wickedness are much deeper and larger than we are apt to suspect; and our pride fights with inexpressible obstinacy against all just conviction. But let us not be discouraged: things impossible with men, are possible with God. Let us pray, not now and then only, but constantly; life is short; we have no other business that ought to interfere with this. It should be the perpetual, it is the most important, employment of the soul. The Scriptures, daily meditated on, will supply us with instruction; and if we persevere, our business in religion will doubtless be made, in due time, our chief pleasure. A thorough insight into human emptiness and worldly vanity, a complete conviction of the evil of sin, even in our own particular case, and a desire to forsake it altogether, a solid discernment of the complete sufficiency of Christ to save us in all respects,—these things, in daily seeking unto God, are to be attained. We

are not so ready to pray, as God is to hear: He delights to magnify Jesus, and to show what the Father can, and will, do for us, through his Son. He calls us to nothing in our own strength; and as we cannot have, so we need not think of having, any worthiness of our own. We may come and take freely, what he freely bestows,—and, my dear Brother, when once in this way, you can stedfastly rely on the Divine promises through Christ; so sure as "faith worketh by love," you will find yourself enabled to love God; and it is in Christ Jesus that his love will be seen. An union and fellowship of Christ will take place, accompanied with the sweetest and pleasantest perception which the human mind can have: Though, frequently and even often, the effervescence of it be but short and momentary, and by very transient glances, yet its steady energy is real and powerful. For to encourage us, we should remember the interest we have in HIM by the ties of a common nature. The second and the fourth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews also represent this point strongly. You may think I deviate from the subject of resignation; but I know no other way of coming to it. Once brought to love Christ above all, we shall love other persons in the best manner, but always in subordination. Even to part with dearest friends will be practicable, because (1 Thessal. iv. 14.) "if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." When we can feel any genuine love to God in Christ, we shall be led to such an acquiescence in his wisdom and goodness, that we shall choose his will to take place rather than ours; and the thought,—how soon all things shall be set right in a future life, and that he

makes all things work together for good,—will reconcile the mind to any thing that God pleases.—And though the dissolution of soul and body be always a serious thing, and against the feelings of nature, yet a mind, whose hope and desire are with Jesus, and which has a constant thirst for spiritual enjoyments as true felicity, and which is loosened from all worldly attachments, must on THE WHOLE wish for death, rather than life, as we all wish most for that which has most of our heart. But the love of God will teach such a one to resign himself, as to the time, to his heavenly Father's will.—You will not mistake me, I hope, as if I supposed all true Christians have learnt all this completely: far from it. These things are learnt by them in a measure; but not without much conflict, opposition from sinful nature all along, and much imperfection. And though it is not easy to confine by rules the order of the Spirit's operations, yet this seems the general order of Christian virtues; viz. repentance, faith, love, resignation.—In Christ himself, this resignation was perfect, "not my will, but thine be done:" And as far as we can trust in him for grace, so far we may receive grace out of his fulness. Among mere men, St. Paul seems the completest pattern of resignation. What a tremendous view is that of his sufferings in the latter part of 2 Cor. xi.! But how practicable did the love of God make every thing to him! In Philippians iv. 11, 12, 13, he tells us he had learned to be content in any state, and that he could do all things through Christ which strengthened him; and the original word, for had learned, μεμυημαι, alluding to the Pagan mysteries, shows that the learning was of a mysterious nature.—Dear Brother, I write in the fulness

of affection, wishing you to make it your main business from day to day to learn these things. I am far from thinking that your long course of afflictions has been against your acquiring them. Oh, let us beg for patience to lie as clay in the hands of His infinite wisdom, who knows how to humble our pride, and to break our wills, and to form us to a conformity to himself! and may you be helped to a steady course of praying, and of seeking God, with a willingness to give up all for Christ!—I have been looking at Dr. ———'s life. The man was unfaithful to his convictions,—for the most part of his life at least. Had he been humbled before God, he would have been despised in the world, but have been comfortable in his own soul. May Christ Jesus visit you, and lead you, dear Brother, to true rest.

"Your's, &c."

Let those, who during Mr. M.'s life thought him an enthusiast, a fanatic, wrong-headed, or in general, irrational, reflect, that this letter was written in great weakness of body, and under such circumstances as could afford little probability of recovery of health*; —and when they have got over their first surprise at the wisdom and solidity of the advice it contains, then let them further reflect on the state of Mr. M.'s mind in those moments when usually all human comforts fail; and on his firm expectations and glorious prospects of a future life, and they may perhaps be disposed to say, "Let me die the death of the righteous;".....

* The violence of Mr. M.'s fever had abated; but he never recovered from its debilitating effects.

An Account of the Writings of the Rev. Joseph Milner.

1. ONE of the most popular and instructive publications of Mr. Milner, is a pamphlet called "Some remarkable Passages in the Life of William Howard;" which has gone through several Editions.

2 His answer to Gibbon's attack on Christianity, though well known to studious persons, and though highly commended by two learned Bishops, has not been so generally dispersed as it deserves*. It is a masterpiece in its kind; and as his friend Mr. Stillingfleet well observes, is not merely to be considered as an answer to the malignant perversions of Gibbon, but is calculated to stand in all ages as an able vindication of the truths of Christianity. The Author was peculiarly qualified for this undertaking, on account of his extensive and accurate knowledge of history. With much ability he has traced and detected the sly windings and malignant perversions of the deceitful Historian, and has also exposed and confuted his numerous misrepresentations. When Mr. Milner first conceived the necessity of this work, no answer had appeared against Gibbon which gave him satisfaction; he revolved the matter deeply in his mind, and often exclaimed, "who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?†"

* This is now reprinted in the last Vol. of the Edition of All his Works.

† In the year 1786, Mr. Milner assisted the Editor in the publication of the Posthumous Works of their venerable Friend Mr. Adam. The Preface to the Private Thoughts was their joint Work. Mr. Stillingfleet wrote the life. Editor, W. R.

N, β. This is the note referred to in page lxxxvi. line 19.

3. His Essays on the Influence of the Holy Spirit were exceedingly well received, and have been of great service in the Church. This work, though small, is a durable monument of the Author's sound principles, good sense, and power of discrimination in argument; and will, doubtless, prove a valuable protection against heretical and fanciful interpretations of Scripture, through succeeding generations.

The Rev. Mr. William Ludlam, a late celebrated Mechanic, and a useful Lecturer in Mathematical Subjects in the University of Cambridge, by his attack on Mr. Milner's observations on Gibbon's account of Christianity, gave occasion to part of this treatise. That Mr. Ludlam turned his mind, in the decline of life, to theological subjects, ought by no means to be objected to him: but it is much to be lamented, that he should have seemed to presume on being able instantly to transfer the knowledge and comprehension which he had acquired in certain subjects which he had studied, and for which he had a taste, to others with which he had not long been conversant. Like most sciolists, he displayed his attainment chiefly in finding fault. His knowledge of the Scriptures was slight; his style, positive, conceited, and objurgatory; and his sarcastic, contemptuous treatment of several excellent and truly religious characters was exceedingly unbecoming.

It may, perhaps, surprise some, who have been accustomed to pay implicit deference to the authority of this Philosopher and Mathematician, to be told, that even in Mathematical subjects, where they have considered him as eminent for skill, and

as safe from mistakes, he could have no very high pretensions to infallibility; that he has actually fallen into errors of considerable magnitude; and that more humility, diffidence, and candour would have become a writer, who, by venturing much beyond his depth, has proved himself a dangerous instructor of youth. The Writer of this Narrative has no particular wish to explain himself further on this head; nor, if he had, would this be a proper place for it. He has a sincere respect for the memory of Mr. William Ludlam, and it may be thought some proof of his respect, that, though the facts here alluded to have been known by him for almost thirty years, they are yet in very few hands. He believes that Mr. William Ludlam was a truly religious man; and he also believes, that his asperities would have worn away if he had lived a little longer, and had become better acquainted with the persons* whose understanding he so much undervalued.

The Writer has given this hint respecting the uncertainty and the fallibility of Mr. William Ludlam's reasoning powers, in the expectation that it may in some measure act as a counterpoise to the weight—not of his arguments, but of his authority. And this is precisely the effect which he wishes it to have.

It should seem that much reliance is placed on the AUTHORITY of the late Mr. William Ludlam,

* This word was, by mistake, printed person in the former edition, instead of persons as it now stands.—The Writer gladly takes this opportunity of making the correction. As the word stood before, it might lead the Public to suppose that the Rev. Mr. W. L. had treated Mr. M. with some PARTICULAR incivility; but no insinuation of that kind was intended.

because his very unscriptural notions on the influence of the Holy Spirit, and other important doctrines, and his erroneous interpretations of particular passages of Holy Scripture, have been of late years cited, retailed, and supported by the Rev. T. Ludlam, with an unexampled self-sufficiency, arrogance, and contempt of others, which would be unpardonable, even if the propositions which he defends had always been demonstrated with a mathematical precision. There can be no good objection to opposition of opinion, nor to the strongest statements: on the contrary, the Writer of this Narrative delights to see men in earnest on deserving subjects; he is well convinced that truth can never suffer from the closest and the most contentious argument; but it should be remembered, that contempt of adversaries, insinuations of weak understanding, and of enthusiasm, and great pretensions to clear ideas and distinct knowledge, have nothing in them of the nature of argument. It is this contempt, these insinuations, and these great pretensions, that induce the Writer to take notice of Mess. L. in this way. He is perfectly aware, that there is also no argument in what he himself here advances respecting their manner of opposing what they disliked. He therefore repeats, that the very little here said, is not urged by way of argument, but briefly hinted by way of caution. All he desires is, that facts may not be taken for granted, but enquired into on all sides.

1. Is it true, or is it not true, that certain religious characters have been treated by the Mess. L. with an overbearing contempt? 2. Have both those Rev. Gentlemen, or either of them, shown,

of not shown, by their writings, that they are but fallible men?—Will it be said, "They MAY still be RIGHT in their arguments on the points in question?" True—And, therefore, once more be it observed, that though argument can be fairly encountered only by argument, yet contempt, overbearing, and such like, may, on most occasions, be properly enough resisted by producing instances of the fallibility of the persons who use such weapons.

Let the Reader consult Mr. Joseph Milner's small volume of Essays*, and then judge for himself, whether, as far as argument is concerned, exclusive of all sort of authority, except what is divine, the despised Enthusiast has not much the better of the contest, particularly in the important question of the influence of the Holy Spirit on the understanding. Let him also compare the contents of these same Essays, with all that has been written on those subjects by both the Rev. Messrs. Ludlam—and judge, WHO HAS WRITTEN MOST LIKE A MAN OF A PLAIN, DOWNRIGHT UNDERSTANDING; WITH THE GREATEST CLEARNESS; WITH THE LEAST PARADE, AND WITH THE DEEPEST AND MOST ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES. These Essays remain yet unanswered.

Nothing can be more natural than that the Rev. T. Ludlam should have a partiality and veneration for the productions of a near relative who well deserved all his respect and esteem. Nor does the Writer of this Narrative make any scruple to confess that, on similar grounds, he feels a par-

* This is now reprinted in the last Vol. of the Edition of All his Works.

tiality of the same sort for the late Rev. Mr. Milner; and on this account he expects his report of that Author's Works to be received with considerable reserve by a cautious public.—But after all it should be recollected, that it is one thing to have a high opinion of the knowledge and ability of a near friend and relative, so as even to think him a model for imitation, and quite another thing to treat men as Fanatics, Enthusiasts, and Rejectors of Reason, or as sly, artful, and designing characters, because they venture to think for themselves in religious concerns, and are not disposed to worship the image which another person sets up.

4. The most arduous and important undertaking of Mr. Milner is his "*History of the Church of Christ*," on a quite new plan. Three Volumes of this excellent work are now before the Public. The Writer therefore does not feel it necessary to say much concerning this performance. He is just now publishing a second Edition of the first Volume, which has long been called for by the Booksellers; and he has begun to print a fourth Volume of the same from the Author's Manuscripts. The fourth Volume will carry down the Work to about the middle of the 16th Century*. Formerly this Country abounded with Divines, who were strenuous and able advocates for the Establishment, who were orthodox in their faith, and who also, were diligent and zealous in the practical application of their principles. Of later years there have not been wanting orthodox members of the Church, who have also shown themselves powerful defenders

* These Volumes have since been published.

of Ecclesiastical institutions; but the persons of this description have not usually been industrious, earnest, plain, and practical preachers of the essential articles of the Christian faith. They seem to have contented themselves with supporting the outworks of Religion, and with occasional declarations of orthodoxy, and almost to have forgotten that whatever, in its aim, stops short of thoroughly awakening the consciences of men, of subduing their natural corruptions, and of producing "a peculiar people zealous of good works," is not "the Gospel of Christ, that power of God unto Salvation," which St. Paul preached. The evil consequences of this fundamental defect have not been few. Many persons, truly conscientious, and sincerely attached both to the doctrine and the discipline of the Church, have often been displeased, and even disgusted, with the defective or erroneous instruction of the pulpit; and this,—at the very time that they approved and admired what came from the reading desk.—And others, who were less friendly to our Ecclesiastical Establishment, have taken advantage of this want of harmony, and thereby promoted mischievous schisms and separations.

Certain of the rulers of the Church, a long time ago, took notice of some of these EFFECTS, and expressed sufficient indignation on the account; but, whether they were thoroughly aware of the cause, or whether they took the right method of curing the evils, are questions of great moment, and which call for most serious and dispassionate consideration.

That some, at least of our present Ecclesiastical

Rulers have now their eyes open to the chief cause of many of the irregular practices, and other unpleasing circumstances, which have taken place in the religious concerns of this country, the Writer of these pages collects, with great satisfaction, from several excellent Charges which of late years have been delivered by eminent and experienced Prelates at their respective visitations.

In regard to himself, he has long been fully persuaded, that the feeble and indistinct statement of fundamental articles of faith, and the almost entire neglect of enforcing the same, and of applying them closely to the consciences of the hearers, has amounted, on the part of many of the Clergy, to a DANGEROUS DEPARTURE from sound doctrine; which, if not checked, will, in no great length of time, be found much more pregnant with mischief, than it is generally suspected to be.—Already a discerning eye can trace the great havoc of the Church which it has made in various ways.

The times are awful and threatening: The Church has determined and inveterate enemies: Sects and parties daily increase in number; and the endless divisions and separations from the Establishment afford a most melancholy symptom of the decay of real religion, and of the ascendancy of loose principles.

Any wise provisions made by the State, for the purpose of strengthening and protecting the Church, ought certainly to be received with gratitude by all lovers of piety and good order. But nothing short of a radical reform of the fundamental defects here mentioned, will effectually remove our dangers.

The present times are not only awful and threatening; they are also peculiarly difficult. The very word REFORM in our days, carries along with it something that alarms;—and with very good reason, when applied to Governments, either of Church or State. The Writer of these pages, however, uses it in a way that cannot be thought exceptionable by any one.

A diligent examination of the internal history of this country in religious matters, will prove, that what he has advanced respecting the departure of many of the Clergy from the doctrines of the Church, is no idle conjecture: and the same examination will also show, beyond all dispute, that commensurate with this departure, and in proportion to it, have been all along the increase of the sectaries, and the diminution of attachment to the Establishment.—Those, therefore, who are accustomed to connect together causes and their effects, cannot but cry out REFORM. By which term, not a hair's breadth more ought to be intended, than that we should return to the GOOD OLD WAY; that we should revert to our original principles. And here happily we have not our principles to seek: they are penned with the greatest clearness and precision.

In one word then, the likeliest method to preserve the unity of the Church, and a consistent harmony among its members, will be, for each individual of the Clerical order, according to his ability and situation, to do his utmost,—first, to comprehend and thoroughly digest that System of Doctrine and Practice comprised in the Articles and Homilies of the

Church, to which he belongs;—then zealously to inculcate those great Truths upon the Minds of the People;—and lastly, in his own Conduct, to exhibit an example of the effects which Christian faith, wherever it is sound and lively, is sure to produce.

The Writer has already expressed the great satisfaction, which the perusal of certain excellent compositions, delivered within these few years at Episcopal Visitations, have afforded him; and he may add, he trusts, without impropriety, that by these very compositions, he has been encouraged to speak out in this manner. He cannot but rejoice, that any of those, who have most power to stop the progress of the evils in question, have shown that they are aware of their cause, and ready to exert their influence and authority to remove it.

For the information of those, who may not be much versed in the history of practical religion, it ought perhaps to be observed, that every thing, which hath been now said respecting the neglect of the fundamental articles of religion in the discourses of the Clergy of the Establishment, is to be understood as having prevailed some thirty or forty years ago, in a much higher degree than it does now.—Within the memory of the Writer, notwithstanding all he has been constrained to say on this subject, he is enabled to declare with certainty, and from his own knowledge,—that there has been a very considerable revival of the pure reformed religion, and that the compositions which are at this day delivered from our pulpits "are of a more Christian cast" than were often heard some thirty years ago. To the same effects, and almost in the very same terms, speaks one of the learned Prelates

above alluded to; and at the same time, adds these remarkable words, "Still the dry strain of moral preaching is too much in use, and the erroneous maxims, on which the practice stands, are not sufficiently exploded."

The judicious Hooker is a striking instance of a Divine, who combined in the same person, and in a very high degree, all the three above-mentioned* requisites: that is, he was able as a defender of the English Ecclesiastical polity; he was sound and clear in his Doctrine; and he was impressive, and pointed, and warm in his practical statements and applications to the people. Mr. Milner often declared that Hooker's Sermon on "Justification by Faith" was among the first things that set his mind to serious thinking. He had not then suspected that there existed a single person of learning or respectability, who held such notions as those of which he was then beginning to think more favourably. He had supposed that they were chiefly confined to persons of no literary attainments, or to certain classes of the dissenters, or perhaps to men who failed not to connect with them much wild and indigested principle, and much irregular practice: Of course, this discovery had no small effect in removing his prejudices, and in exciting his attentive curiosity.

If it be true that few of the late public defenders of our Establishment have combined sound evangelical principles, with a warm and well-directed zeal, that circumstance will stamp a peculiar value on Mr. Milner's Church History, in the minds of all who are well acquainted with the execution of that performance. Its intrinsic value is more and more

* Mentioned in page cv. 26—29.

understood; and it will, doubtless, continue to increase in estimation, in proportion as the literal meaning of the Articles of the Church of England is more confirmed by a just interpretation of Scripture; and in proportion as men take greater pleasure in seeing the pure faith of the Gospel exemplified in the lives of those, who profess themselves believers in Christ Jesus.

It would be inconsistent to expect that those, who, on principle, dissent from the Church of England, should accord with this Author in the Contents of his Chapter on Ecclesiastical establishments, however cordially they may agree with him in the Doctrine of Salvation by Jesus Christ. But it may seem somewhat remarkable that the Rev. Dr. Haweis, himself a member, and even a beneficed Clergyman of that Church, should have taken SUCH EXTRAORDINARY and SUCH UNFAIR means to counteract the effect of Mr. Milner's labours. Dr. Haweis' "IMPARTIAL HISTORY," as he calls it, abounds with mis-quotations and misrepresentations. An account of these, with animadversions upon them by the Writer of this Narrative, may be seen in the Preface to the second Edition of the first Volume of Mr. Milner's History, published at Cambridge*.

* That Volume was published in the Summer of 1800.

Observations on Conformity.

By the Rev. Wm. Richardson.

THE Rev. William R. the Editor of these Sermons, is tempted to add a few observations on the subject of Conformity. In a long account which he has seen of Dr. Haweis' Publication in one of the Reviews, it is said to express the "opinions of that part of the Clergy of the Church of England, which has assumed to itself the title of Evangelical, among whom he is to be considered as a leading Member." This statement, however, requires explanation. 1. If there be, indeed, a part of the Clergy of the Church of England, who call themselves Evangelical, and who also approve of Dr. Haweis' mode of proceeding, so as to consider him as one of their leading members, the Editor hopes most cordially that it is but a VERY SMALL PART.—2. There is a very considerable part of the Clergy of the Church of England, who, strictly speaking, assume to themselves no title, but that of faithful and sincere members of the Establishment to which they belong; though the Editor does not deny, that they are frequently termed Evangelical, sometimes by way of distinction, and at others, strange as it may seem, by way of sneer and reproach. Dr. H. so far from being a leading member, or a fair specimen of this class of the Clergy, is going on in a way which they extremely dislike.—They agree with Mr. Milner in his views of Church Order and Government, and look upon all separations from the Establishment as serious evils. Dr. Haweis' book seems to be an apology for Schism; which according to him is rather

a DUTY than a SIN, when there is cause. Did he ever hear of any divisions in the Church, or seditions in the State, without some cause, some provocation being alleged to vindicate them? Such loose sentiments, on the point of Conformity, entertained by Dr. Haweis, and by a few more Preachers too fond of popularity, who encourage separate places of worship, and despise the order of the Church in which they were called to minister, ought not to be imputed to the whole body of those, who are called Evangelical Clergy. They love their Church, and conduct themselves according to her rules, for conscience sake: though they may suffer, undeservedly, as Methodists or Sectaries from one quarter, and as Time-servers and Bigots from another.

From this peculiarity in their situation, they will hardly be suspected of interested motives in their attachment to the Established Church. Certainly, it is not her loaves and fishes, but her sound doctrines, and edifying forms of worship, that bind them to her. She may have many faults, and her officers and members still more; but she must be proved to be Antichristian, before separation from her can be justified. Nothing short of this could vindicate our departure from the Church of Rome, at the Reformation. Against all separations and divisions we are solemnly and repeatedly warned in the New Testament. These warnings ought not to be overlooked by the serious members of the Church, who are taught to pray in their incomparable Litany, "from all heresy and schism, good Lord, deliver us." They who look not far before

them, may think small deviations from established order, for the sake of greater spiritual improvement and edification, allowable; but they who have watched the tendency of such deviations, have found that they always ended in the sacrifice of those sound principles by which mankind are kept in subjection to God and to one another, and by which alone social harmony and subordination can be maintained.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.

ORIGINAL SIN.

Gen. viii. 21.

The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.

SUCH is the character given of man, not by the flattering pencil of man himself, but by Him who searches the heart, and who alone knows it thoroughly,—The LORD our MAKER!

The doctrine which the words contain is commonly called Original Sin. It is the first doctrine of the Scriptures. The whole religion of the Bible supposes it, requires it, and is built upon it; and it is so much a first principle, that he, who will not learn this, can learn nothing else to make him wise unto salvation. It must not be expected, that in one popular discourse, I should do full justice to a subject of so much importance. But I shall throw out a few hints concerning it, for the consideration of those, who either do not believe it, or are not affected with it. And I hope to shew it to be not only a true, but a most important and most necessary doctrine. The proof of it shall briefly be given from Scripture and from facts. The vanity of objections, and the necessity of a practical learning of the doctrine must be shewn: The truth of all the rest of the capital doctrines of Scripture must

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be illustrated on the supposition of the certainty of this: And the great point of instruction in the way of salvation, as the consequence of the whole, must be distinctly stated.

1st, The thing asserted in the Text is true, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." The words are very plain. Can there be more than one meaning annexed to them? It is not asserted of this or of that man, but of mankind universally. And this too "from his youth;" from the earliest life, before there can be any opportunity to corrupt him by bad examples or habits. The disposition itself is bad. The first conceptions of man, before they are expressed in words or actions, even the imaginations are evil: How evil then must he be! If the source itself be poisonous, how destructive must be the waters that flow from it, in the whole current of human conduct? And he, who says this, is the Lord who cannot lie. The occasion of his saying so shews the doctrine in the fullest light, as he is assigning a reason, why he will no more cut off mankind by a flood, as he had done: And what is the reason he will not? Is it that men are better now than formerly? No! man is evil from his youth, in his imaginations. Every generation is so, and will be so, and therefore he might cut them all off, one after another, and never cease to destroy them by floods. Their incurable wickedness is then the true reason, why, after having made an example of one generation, in this manner, he will not repeat the experiment. Such is the force of the divine declaration to Noah after the flood. "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake;

for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done." And yet, when "the Lord looked upon every thing that he had made, behold it was very good." So we are told in the conclusion of the account of the Creation, in the first chapter of Genesis. Man then must have been entirely altered; and the third Chapter shews us how this was effected in the sin and fall of our first parents.

In this chapter there is surely information enough to satisfy a modest mind of the depraved and accursed state to which we are naturally reduced; information, which is no where else to be obtained, and which facts are continually confirming in the world; though not such as to gratify impertinent curiosity, or to humour the vain reasonings of men, who would undertake to fathom what is above them. And so long as Moses continues to relate the history of mankind, so long the proof, by experience, proceeds. We first trace it from the murder of Abel to the flood, and to the universal depravity then prevailing. But, surely, after so terrible an example, the next race of human beings will be quite different. We have heard the Lord declaring far otherwise in the text. Corruption, like a torrent, soon breaks down the fences of the most wholesome divine restraints; and soon the knowledge and worship of the true God is lost. Nor is there an instance of any person or people ever recovering themselves from idolatrous and universal wickedness, by the force of their reason or the strength of their resolutions.

Against the direct tendency of our nature, and by a special interposition and a succession of miracles, Almighty God preserves some knowledge and worship of himself in one people only, the Jews. Yet, what does all their history shew, but the strength of overbearing natural wickedness, continually breaking down all fences, and prevailing against the greatest encouragements and the strongest means to the contrary. Israel is constantly prone to evil. Their history is a history of rebellion. "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord since the day that I knew you," says Moses. And future generations of them were no better. The few excellent men among them, whom divine grace raised up and directed to preach to and warn them, how were they treated? Hear Saint Stephen's account, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" It is not then by a text here and there only that we prove Original Sin. The proof of it is every where, in every page of sacred story.

Yet particular testimonies might be enumerated. "I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me," David confesses. "We are all as an unclean thing; and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," is the confession of Isaiah, in the name of the whole Church; and, in his own name he laments thus, "Wo is me, for I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips." The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Not this or that man's only, but MAN'S in general,

Jeremiah declares. "The way of man is froward and strange," Solomon confesses, "but as for the pure, his work his right." Why so? Through divine grace. But without it, of himself by nature, man is froward and strange, yea, "filthy and abominable." For in the book of Job we find these words, "who drinketh iniquity like water." When the Divine Saviour preaches the necessity of being born again, he says, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This is declaring in the strongest manner that man is, in his natural state, totally depraved. He would not need to be renewed in his whole disposition, if this were not the case. A little outward reformation, or some amendments and alterations for the better would be sufficient. These satisfy pharisaical persons in all ages, and are sufficient in the opinion of those who do not believe themselves lost sinners. But Christ tells us, that, "the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost." In many other passages, Original Sin is confessed in all its strength. What a renewed man is through grace is called SPIRIT, in the Scriptures. What he is of himself is called FLESH. St. Paul confesses, "I know that in me, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." He also speaks of "sowing to the flesh, and of sowing to the spirit," shewing us, that the flesh is ours properly. Therefore he says HIS flesh. But the spirit, the new nature, is of God in Christ altogether.

The third chapter of the epistle to the Romans contains a map of man's nature. "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that seeketh

after God; they are all gone out of the way; they are altogether become unprofitable; destruction and misery are in their ways; there is no fear of God before their eyes." The Scripture proof of the doctrine is thus invincible.

Let us now recur to facts. If men who have accustomed themselves to take notice of ANY thing rather than what passes in their own breasts, and whose eyes and ears are open to every thing around them, while they take no observation of the frame of their own spirits, would retire inward, and consider how it has been with them all their days, conviction would soon follow. Long before example and habit could do any thing, they certainly shewed the imagination of their hearts to have been evil from their youth. "As soon as they were born, they went astray and spake lies." They always shewed a predominant love of the world. From infancy we discover this propensity. To have the attention quite taken up with present things; to seek to gratify our senses and our passions; to live as if this world were to last always, and we always to live in it; not to make it an object of any consequence to please our Maker—whoever honestly weighs the frame of his own spirit by nature, must see that this description applies to his case. What means the excessive unwillingness to think at all of God and a future life? Whence the variety of excuses to satisfy conscience, and to make ourselves easy without prayer? How exceedingly difficult is it to bring the mind to think seriously, for five minutes together, on the concerns of the soul? But this is not for want of capacity and power of attention. We

can think long enough on things that we love. The gay pleasurable young man is not fatigued with prosecuting schemes of lewdness and intemperance: Nor is the careful man of business soon tired with thinking, labouring, and conversing on objects of trade: And the trifler and newsmonger, and busy body in other men's matters, is not soon tired with his enquiries, or with tattling about what he hears in every company.

The world, Brethren, in one shape or another, according to the variety of tastes and tempers, and education and circumstances, fills the mind of man by nature. Conscience is indeed importunate with him at times; but he has a thousand ways to stifle it, and drown its voice; and he can live year after year without seeking God, without making it a point of any great consequence with himself, how matters stand between God and his soul. Yet men can conceive how much eternity is to be preferred before time: And the patience and labour with which many go through disagreeable present hardships, in hopes of growing rich, and reaping the reward of their care and toils, shew that men have a capacity of denying themselves present pleasures in hopes of future good things. Why do they not exercise this to secure the happiness of eternity? Why? but because of the entire wickedness of their natures, alienated and turned wholly from God, and at enmity with him. Indeed it is a strong sign of our natural depravity, that we are disposed to behave worse to God, when he favours us with prosperity, than when he chastises us with adversity. Instead of studying to shew gratitude to him, we grow pre-

sumptuous. And I am apt to think that this is universal. Health, riches, a great flow of success, corrupt the heart, and fill it with insolence and pride. It could not be so, if the heart were not naturally evil.

See that proud careless sinner in full health and prosperity. You must not speak to him concerning his soul: he is above such vulgar considerations. He leaves the business of prayer to poor people, to afflicted persons, and to silly enthusiasts. But behold! God has visited him with sickness. He is frighted with the thought of dying. His conscience tells him, that God and he are not on good terms. Then he will have the company of praying people, or of a minister, whom at other times he despised. He will now beg hard for mercy. He will wish he had lived in a different manner, and will promise his Maker how much better he will lead his life, if he please to spare him. He recovers. He soon forgets all. He shuns the society which he before had courted in his distress, and gives himself to the company of men of the world. What tends to make this less shocking to serious minds is its being so common, that none are surprized at it. Oh! how evil the heart which thus flies from a God of infinite goodness, and buries itself in the world!—I shall just mention one thing more.

We know, in a house or family, if there be one person much disliked by all the rest, how ready they are to lay the blame on him, if any thing go wrong. "This is owing to Him, nothing thrives that He meddles with, it is like Him." Those who have observed such things know, that speeches of this kind prove nothing, but the ill-will of the speakers

against the person. Now it has pleased God to take care by his own effectual grace, and power and wisdom, that there always should be some to honour him in the world; some persons, who truly fear him and love him, and serve him in the Gospel of his Son. The treatment which these meet with is another proof of the great wickedness of human nature. They are hated, slandered, censured, discouraged, more than others. Men are uneasy in their company; view them with fear and disgust; and are glad of every opportunity to defame them. And whatever mischief happens in the world, is readily ascribed to them; just as the hated person in a house, whom I have before mentioned, is treated by the rest. We have not yet ceased to hear of the harm done by men of much religion, during the confusions of the last century. The villany and hypocrisy of Cromwell are urged as a lasting ground of reproach against thousands, who fear God, pray in sincerity, and mind heavenly things.

You may see this in a strong light by comparing our proceedings in another matter. Many persons undertake to trade, and by foolish and absurd schemes and extravagancies are ruined. Men do not thence infer that trade is a bad thing. I never heard any person reason thus, "Since such and such people trade a while and then break, it is a foolish thing to follow merchandise at all." No, no, men love the world too well to be tempted to reason so weakly. Yet because there have been false pretenders to the new birth, how many ridicule the new birth altogether, and are content without the love of God, or any hearty religion at all? The reason

is, because God himself is disliked by us, therefore we are glad of any specious handle, to pick a quarrel with his people. I wish careless persons to examine thus their own breasts; they may find these and a thousand such proofs within themselves, testifying that the imaginations of man's heart are evil.

'3d, I would warn you to avoid the usual method of all who shut their eyes against the conviction of their own consciences. They argue against matter of fact, as if it were impossible that man should be thus corrupt by nature. How unreasonable this is! If men were disposed to hearken to fair reasoning, the fallacy of this would appear, by only transferring the subject from the soul to the body. You are very ill, dangerously ill. The fever has already made an alarming progress. Are you to begin to dispute the fact, and say it is impossible it should be so, because the goodness of God would not suffer his creatures to be thus afflicted? Yet thus do men argue, who have in their own breasts as plain proofs of a natural disease of soul, from their birth, as they have of a disorder in their bodies.

God knows what is fit for him to do. I am an ignorant, short-sighted creature. What he has revealed, I may safely cleave to, and no more. He has told me, that he made man upright, but he is fallen from this state. He considers the whole human race collectively in our first Father, like a large tree, all whose branches are one with the stock and partake of its nature, whatever that nature be. It is impossible that my reasonings against this should signify any thing, unless I can pretend to say, that I understand the nature of the union of the

human race in Adam; the quantity of the evil that is in sin; the necessity of punishing it; and the grounds and reasons of the Divine Government. Of all these things I am as unfit to judge as an infant is of the construction of a ship. By this time you may see, that the opposition men make to the fall, on grounds of reason, is itself no mean proof of the doctrine, because it proves their exceeding great pride and arrogance. The fact is, you are in a fever. Get better of your fever if possible. Apply to the Physician. Be his patient. Follow his directions; and leave idle disputings. This is the voice of common sense in the care of the body; and it would be thought so in the care of the soul, if man were as wise for the next world as he is for this.

4th, That this advice, O Sinner, may come with full weight on thy conscience, be thoroughly convinced of thy condition. Rest not till thou hast made out what thy frame of heart is. If the imagination of man's heart be evil from his youth, it may be known to be so. The symptoms will prove it as plainly as the symptoms of a fever prove that distemper to lodge in the human body. And those who have written books and argued against Original Sin, might (and they would, if they had been men of real honesty in religion) have proved the point by their own experience. Our Saviour has told us that the two great commandments are, to love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. Bring yourselves to this test. Do you love God? Do you love your neighbour? Examine deeply; and watch the very motions of your heart, what in the text is called its imagination. I am sure, the best

men, in all ages, who have taken true pains to search into the matter, who have prayed the most, and been the most careful against sin, do all agree that their hearts are naturally void of this pure love both to God and to their neighbour; and that till they were changed by Divine grace and made new creatures, they had none of it at all. It is incredible that these should all be deceived. God hears prayer, and would surely direct them right.

I know many have said that it is far otherwise with them. They have always had honest and good hearts. But what sort of men are they? The show of their countenance witnesses against them. Pride is written on their foreheads, and whoever knew them at all, might know they were men of most unreasonable arrogance, and vastly elated in a conceit of themselves, beyond any just grounds to which their talents or their actions entitled them.

Let you and me, Brethren, get this matter decided by experience. If we have not done so yet; if we are unwilling to bring ourselves to this test; this of itself is no slight evidence of our depravity. What is it to me, to get money; to get praise or fame; to be amused with diversions; to know all the news of the town; and yet to remain a stranger to what passes every day in my own breast? Is there indeed a natural principle of love to the best of Beings, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Surely, if you attend closely and fairly, you must see that you do not naturally love God in this manner at all; but are very averse from, or quite indifferent about him; and that you are alive only to the world. This is proved by the

coldness of your prayers; by your perfect want of delight in God, in Christ, in divine things, and in the prospect of the world to come. Whatever then be the case of other people, you have not the love of God in you. You have a dangerous fever, which will burn within you for ever, if it be not cured in this life.

5th, Though the experience of this may be painful, and hurt your pride and your lusts, yet is it wholesome; and you now are prepared to attend to the rest of the doctrines of Scripture. Once knowing yourselves to be altogether evil, as the Lord by Moses in the text describes us, you have obtained one grand proof of the truth and certainty of the Scriptures. It is the only book which has laid open this evil state of man fully and clearly, with its cause and its effects, and circumstances. You will be prepared to hear what the Lord declares in it for your cure. And indeed you will obtain, in this way, the most satisfying proof of the truth of the whole word of God, and comprehend the true order and spirit of every other part of divine truth.* It is for want of this true self-knowledge that there are so few true Christians in the world. The greater part, who call themselves so, do not care for religion. And some, who do, study books after books, without serious prayer for divine illumination, and without bringing doctrines to the test of experience. Their heads are busied, while their hearts and consciences are unexercised with religion. A little experimental knowledge is of great importance in religion. While men are too proud or too careless to cultivate that, they live ignorant of them-

selves, and build on this or on that great man's authority, without knowing any thing for themselves. Oh! Brethren, search your hearts, till you know what they are, and you will find that you need an entire change indeed.

I purpose, if God give me leave, in a few plain discourses, to go through a course of Experimental Divinity. Let this be considered as the first of them. There is a propriety in such a beginning. He, who knows not that "the imagination of his heart is evil from his youth," has not yet begun any religion that will be of service to him. But, if you do indeed know yourselves to be thus evil, I say in the last place get yourselves acquainted with JESUS CHRIST, the great Physician of the soul. Men only trifle with a physician and his medicines, while they think themselves whole and sound. But, if you have this disease; if you are sure of it; if the poison of sin is felt both in its guilt and power; know, there is no Healer but the Son of God. Come to Him for cure. Get admitted into His house. All, who seek His help, he receives freely and without price. Rest on him by faith. Continue patient under his hand and abide there. He dismisses none incurable: In due time you shall find yourselves made whole: And you will be admitted, at length, to join in those songs of health and praise, that are for ever heard in the mansions of the blessed.

SERMON II.

THE CHURCH OF GOD CONFESSING HER GUILT AND DEPRAVITY.

Isaiah lxiv. 6, 7.

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.

It is one of the most afflicting things to a real Pastor of Christ's church, to see those, who profess divine truth, scandalizing it in practice, and after a fair appearance of godliness returning like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. The evils of our fallen nature are so many, the world is so alluring, and the snares of Satan are so crafty, that many causes may be assigned for this grievous backsliding. But the chief cause is, the want of self-knowledge and of a just conviction of our own sinfulness. Self-love is flattering; we are apt to flatter one another; we do not easily see the depth of iniquity within us; lurking pride deceives us, and we are willingly deceived.

Indeed when it is considered how few spend any time in serious self-examination, we need not wonder

that we are so much imposed on in this respect. To know our own selves, is what many great and wise men have never attained, living or dying. In persons, who have no Christian seriousness, it is not to be expected. All other religions, and all the doctrines of philosophers in all ages, are utterly void of this knowledge. It is among those only, who follow Christ in sincerity, that self-knowledge is to be found. All the rest are destitute of it.

The evils of this ignorance are great. Men without self-knowledge are proud and presumptuous; walk rashly and carelessly; stumble at Christian doctrines; value nothing in religion, but what has present comfort in it; are displeased with the true language of humility; and do not cordially submit to CHRIST, who is the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." After having healed their superficial convictions falsely, and finding no real food in the Gospel to feed on, they are apt to return to the world and its vanities.

To know ourselves, and to know God in Christ, are the two great objects of Christian enquiry. No man knoweth either aright, but by the Holy Ghost. Light from above is needful, in subjects which we are of all others, by nature, most insensible of, and most averse to. In hope of this effectual influence, I shall at present lay before you one of these two subjects, THE KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES. The words of the text, and indeed the whole prayer of which they are a part, illustrate it. It is the Church of God, which is praying and confessing her sins and miseries. Whoever do this in a right manner, always seem, in the opinion

of Pharisees, to say too much against themselves. The confession begins at the 15th verse of the foregoing chapter, and reaches through this.

They own the Lord as their Father, their Redeemer. They own themselves erring from his ways, and hardening their "heart from his fear." In much sense of evil they beg for the Lord's manifestation of himself. They comfort themselves with expectations of his meeting them with his mercies; and they believe that upon those alone, who wait for him, he will bestow all they can ask or conceive. But they confess their own inward wickedness. "We are all as an unclean thing," not fit to appear before a holy God: Not some of us only, but all of us; not only hypocritical professors and open enemies of true religion; but regenerate persons also, in whom is found a root of Christian sincerity, and who being clothed with Christ as their righteousness shall enjoy life eternal. But separate from Christ, and considered as they are in themselves, and in their best doings and best works, and best state, in this life, they are "all as an unclean thing." The holy Prophet takes himself into the number; and the whole strain of the confession shews that it belongs to the whole professing Church, among whom there always were some true and genuine believers. And one mark of them I shall here venture to give. They are humble: They know and feel the plague of their own hearts: They are of all men most sensible of the uncleanness which defiles their best actions. Men who are apt to think much of their own holy attainments, very commonly, by their misconduct, give others great

occasion to complain of them; though they make no complaint against themselves. True Christians, whose peculiar character is humility, generally give no occasion to others to complain of them, though they feel the load of in-dwelling sin all their days upon earth.

"We are all as an unclean thing." Are we humbled enough, brethren, by self-knowledge, to make this confession? An unclean person, by the law of Moses, could not enter the sanctuary. Nor was there any way of cleansing him but by sacrifices,—which prefigured the Lord Christ. We being all unclean, nothing that we do can make us otherwise in the sight of God. The stain and pollution of sinful nature infects all our actions. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." He only, who came into the world, without this infection, in the lovely image of divine holiness;—That "holy thing" born of the Virgin, the Son of God,—He only is perfectly acceptable (I am speaking of his human nature) in all he does; holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. 'Tis by being taken into him, in a mysterious sense, out of a state of nature, and by deriving life out of his fulness, that we begin to live to God indeed. Still it is true, in this life, "when I would do good, evil is present with me," even though "I delight in the law of God after the inward man," which certainly no unregenerate person does in any degree. So fully does St. Paul in Romans 7th agree with the Evangelical Prophet in the chapter before us. Indeed in that 7th chapter he so strongly describes the sense of his sinfulness, that many have quite

mistaken him, and supposed that he was speaking of himself while he was persecuting the Church, or that he was personating an ungodly character; or, at least, that he was speaking of a person only beginning to seek God. The truth is, and the whole context shews it, he was speaking of himself at that very time of his writing. "With the mind," says he, "I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin."

When we begin to set forth these things to persons who have never known themselves, they are ready to ask, whether such feeling descriptions do not arise from a consciousness of having committed murder, or some other scandalous crime? For the natural man knows no great evil in any thing but certain acts of gross external wickedness; and I remember the Papists took advantage, from confessions of this sort which Luther left in writing, to accuse him of great outward wickedness, though no man's life was more irreproachable. But he was very eminent in this self-knowledge. The leprosy, brethren, lies deep within, and infects all, even the best things, we do. There is not that purity of intention, and perfect uprightness of heart; that genuine reverence and love of God; that unfeigned love of our fellow creatures, in our very best deeds, which there ought to be. And the want arises from the sour leaven of our evil nature, which, mixing with all things, prevents us from being just before God in any one thing. From first to last we need justification by the righteousness of Jesus Christ, and to feel our need of this. And to prize our Lord Christ, and to love him as the Lord our Righteous-

ness, and thence to be conducted into the paths of true holiness of heart and life, is the great use of the whole subject. If you are too proud to enter seriously into it, you will be in danger either of living in sin carelessly, or of taking up a self-righteous religion, instead of that of Jesus Christ.

"And all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." After what has been said, we need not be surprized, that the prophet confesses our righteousnesses to be filthy rags. RAGS, because they cover not our nakedness, and give us no garment to appear in before God; and FILTHY rags, because of the sin that stains even the best actions. The same St. Paul explains this also in the 3d chapter to the Philippians. "Those things which were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." He not only counted all things which he formerly did as loss for Christ; but he now counts ALL THINGS but loss, even what he was doing at that present time. Separate from Christ even his best actions, in which he was led by the Spirit of God, are but filthy rags. They make no garment to cover his naked soul, no righteousness in which he may boast before God. The sin, which cleaved to his best actions, if imputed, would condemn him with everlasting ruin. Such is the evil of sin. St. Paul knew how to thank God, that he had a justifying righteousness in which he could appear before God, but this was, as he says, the righteousness which is of God through the faith of Christ. The holiness wrought in him, and the holy acts which he performed, were not

that righteousness. Compared with that they were filthy rags. Holiness, in truth, is divinely precious; but must be renounced as filthy rags in point of dependance. Righteousness is imputed to him that worketh not, but believeth *.

I would gladly remind you of these peculiarly Christian truths, Brethren. We all commend humility, charity, patience, heavenly-mindedness. Such fruits grow only under the influence of Christian truths. And yet these truths themselves are very much despised in the world, and too faintly seen and held by many who have some seriousness. They must not be kept out of sight. They are ever found to be needful for the comfort of truly awakened consciences, and without them God becomes a mere name in the world. And I am persuaded, that every one, who knows himself and who has not been sophisticated by prejudices, will feel disposed to join with the Prophet, "all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags." It is a confession which true humility is ever disposed to make; and he, who sees how short of his duty he is in all things, does make it. And the more holy men really are, the more they have of this humility. For, admitting that the mournful confession of the text suited more particularly the state of the Church, when sensible of great declining and backsliding, yet there is in every real Christian's experience, at all times, such a sense of imperfection, that he can adopt the main of this confession as belonging to himself during the whole of his pilgrimage. In truth, this is one of the happy uses of godly sorrow;

* Rom. iv. 5.

that it reconciles the mind to the thoughts of death, and causes a Christian to long more earnestly for that state in which sin shall be no more.

"We all do fade as a leaf." How is this felt by every real child of God! How often is it so with him! The mind was full of divine love and wrapt in pleasing meditation, it may be, in the morning. How soon does the fervour of devotion wear off, and how insensibly do worldly things deaden the mind, in the course of the day! So that he may justly say, "I fade as a leaf." We all do so, says the Prophet, speaking of something that belongs to all, and for which there is a deep cause. The worm of an evil nature secretly devours all the strength that we have. But the Lord from time to time revives the souls of those who wait on him; and it is in this way, that they go on from strength to strength till they arrive at the heavenly kingdom. If left to ourselves, even after sincere and holy attainments, we should lose ALL, both root and branch; because of the power of in-dwelling sin.

"And our iniquities like the wind have taken us away." You feel this at times particularly, when lust and passion inwardly rise and swell strongly. Although you resolve and strive, still the evil within will strive for dominion; and you see and feel, as many as know these things, that iniquity, like a strong wind, would carry you away, as it does men still unregenerate, were it not for the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

In the decline and deadness of our souls, we feel "there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee." Real

Christians know it is their duty and wisdom to "take hold of their God in Christ" by faith. But can they, without his help, pray feelingly and stir up themselves to take hold of God? They feel they cannot. Nature is dead. "For thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us because of our iniquities." We are like the earth, cold and lifeless, if deprived of the sun. These things are well known to men experienced in the divine life. I wonder not that those who are ignorant of themselves should think this representation strange. But let me beseech such to examine themselves, by the rule of God's word, and * the best Expositors of it.

1. If you are ignorant of and averse from God; If you have heard for years without profit; If you are still far from God, a slave to sin, and alive only to the word,—to what is it owing? Not to the want of a Saviour. He is all-sufficient, suitable, and free for our salvation, and "he by the grace of God tasted death for every man." You remain under the power of unbelief, of pride, and of pre-

* Vid. Hervey's Theron and Aspasio.

I know no author in the English tongue who has given so full and clear a discovery of the depravity of our nature, in all its faculties and branches. His arguments are addressed forcibly and familiarly to the conscience; the heart is laid open to its owner, and all this with a design to humble the sinner, to bring him off from self-righteous pride and dangerous dependance on his own qualities and performances, and to lead him naked and forlorn to Jesus Christ. The book is excellent in illustrating this subject of spiritual conviction, and indeed (with some allay of human frailty) of all the fundamentals of godliness, which the author adorned in a superior degree, in his own life. Notwithstanding the contempt in which he is held, I must say, whether I consider the humble and serious spirit with which he writes, or the undoubted proofs of the great success which has attended his writings, he appears to have been one of the most useful writers of our time.

judice; and the strength of your corruptions hinders you from receiving Christ and taking hold of God's covenant. Even if, at times, you see something of the system of God's truth, it is without life, unction*, or spirit. No affections are exhibited in you towards God. You make no approaches to him, by Christ, in believing. The whole employment and work of faith, which receives Christ and works by him, and so produces both peace of conscience and holiness of living, is quite unknown to you. Orthodox notions of God are the utmost that you attain to, and how many in our age are even averse from these? But the soundest opinions, if there be no more, leave the soul naked, dead, and unfruitful. Know that it is your ignorance of your own hearts, and of the holy law and nature of God, which keeps you in your evil state. Christ is a Physician; but you are not sick. He is a garment of righteousness; but you see not yourselves naked. He is the bread of life; but you are not hungry. He is living water; but you are not thirsty. He came that they who see not might see; but you say, we see. You want the stimulative of the text, the wholesome, though mortifying knowledge, which is to teach you true humility, without which, whatever you know turns only into poison, like wholesome food to those whose bodily constitution is wholly out of order. Set yourselves to acquire this sort of knowledge. But it will require thought, care, time, and labour. You must be content to abstain from many other objects of knowledge, which now fill your souls with vanity. You may very easily, with-

* 1 John ii. 10.

out any great pains or consumption of time, know enough, for instance, of public affairs, to enable you to see your duty herein, which is to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and to seek its good; and as St. Paul says, to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey Magistrates, and to be ready to every good work. You may very soon know enough of the common news of the town,—so much I mean as you may turn to good account, for many know much more than they can derive any profit from, either for themselves or for others. You must not give yourself wholly to company or amusements, else you will live in a crowd, and be likely all your days never to know any thing of yourself. The most innocent and the safest kind of human knowledge is that which belongs to your trade or business in life, be it what it may. For in that you are called on to be diligent, and you need not by that be in the least hindered from attaining the necessary wholesome knowledge I am recommending to your attention.

Remember the rule of duty, to love God with all the heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. Bring your heart to this test, see how self-love swallows you up, and leaves you void of any genuine love to God or man. Examine every day how your life is spent, the frame of your desires, the current of your imaginations, the bent of your tempers, the stream of your affections, and the use you make of the tongue. Surely if you be duly serious in this concern, you will find that you are as an unclean thing, and all your righteousness are as filthy rags that can never cover you from the wrath of God, being

stained with pride, envy, discontent, deceit, bitterness, vanity, sensuality, covetousness. Some one or other of these members of the old man are continually appearing, and defiling all you do or say. And when you add to this the sanction of the divine law, "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them," how can you stand before God in any shape or view, by your works? The law can shew no mercy. It is not the nature of the law to do this. You have incurred the penalty.

But "God is merciful," I hear you say, "and I hope to be saved through the merits of Christ." This language ill becomes such as you, who are strangers to the excellency of the Divine Character, and who pay no hearty regard to Christ at all. Before you talk of mercy, are you in the number of those who know or believe they need it? Do you think yourselves justly under the curse? If you would weigh the inmost motions of your souls, you might know that you are unwilling to come to Christ for life; for your heart rises with indignation against this humbling doctrine. That you have done some things not exactly right, and that you have frailties, you will allow; and it is no great sacrifice for pride to stoop to this, especially as such as you, by joining others to your company, spare yourselves the shame and confusion of confession. "We are all sinners," I hear you say. Ah! Brethren, seek to know yourselves as sinners justly accursed and condemned by God's holy law. Learn to know that this is your case, that you are in real danger of perishing, that you are tied and bound, as

our church speaks, with the chain of your sins. Till some real degree of this self-knowledge is attained, men cannot duly prize nor enter into the spirit of the Gospel at all. They will be always inclined to depreciate the grace of God, and to nourish endless objections to the method of Salvation proposed in the Bible. Let me beg of you to cultivate practically this self-knowledge. God only can give it effectually; but we are reasonable creatures, and I have no notion of that religion, even if it pretend to the influence of the Holy Spirit on the will or affections, which does not enlighten the understanding.

You must use means for this: I have recommended one,—self-examination. Another and a necessary one is prayer and supplication. Hear how the Psalmist speaks. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any way of wickedness in me." He, who said these words, knew his own heart as well as most men; and in general through grace, was one of the most sincerest lovers of God that ever lived. He was the man after God's own heart. How few are like him in any age for self-knowledge. In his Psalms, you sometimes see him rejoicing in God, at others, mourning for sin. For true godly experience has its joys in this life, as well as its sorrows, though the main stream of this discourse has led me rather to speak of the latter. But, if he so earnestly prayed for light, how ought we, so much his inferiors, to pray for the same? How ought those, who as yet know nothing, rightly in religion, to fear lest they should be deceived to their ruin. May they learn true wisdom.

2. If any persons, professing Gospel truths, have arrived at a state so presumptuous and confident, as to be above all the feelings of in-dwelling sin, which have been described, they have, it is plain, gotten above the Lord's prayer. "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." Yes, we need daily to ask forgiveness of God; and also daily to forgive others. Our present state of infirmity requires both these dispositions. There are, in this life, no angels. Our Lord has promised that his people shall be equal to the angels hereafter, being the children of the Resurrection. It is not so here. Take care you be not thus deceived. In all ages of the church more or less of this proud spirit, calling itself holiness, has appeared; but it is really a proud delusion; and it is our duty to warn you against it; and to exhort you to labour after holiness to the utmost; but, make not a Christ of it. Live on him by faith as your righteousness and your strength. Live humbly on him, and you will grow in real grace all your days.

SERMON III.

JESUS CHRIST, AN UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

2 Corinthians, ix. 15.

Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift.

THERE are several particulars, either expressed or implied in this short sentence, which will deserve our consideration; and which, when duly attended to, will be found, all together, to make the most important subject in the world, and to display the real use and genius of that Religion of which we make profession. The great Preacher of this Religion is thanking "God for his unspeakable Gift." It well becomes us then to ask,—

What are the natural circumstances of mankind which render any gift, that is necessary for them, so great as to deserve the title of UNSPEAKABLE? What the Gift itself is? What the way, by which any person may receive, or reap the benefit of it? And, in what manner thankfulness for the gift ought to be shown by those who receive it?

The Lord himself, our Saviour, and God our Father, supply to us the promised Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation to understand and receive aright these things, which to the natural man are foolishness, and which no man knoweth but by the Holy Ghost.

Many, in setting forth the propriety and expediency of the divine Mission of our Saviour, confine their thoughts to the dark and corrupt state of the World at the time he made his appearance in the Flesh:—a trifling consideration this, and an ensnaring one too; for it would imply that the circumstances of mankind are better now than they were then. The truth is, human nature has ever been the same; there never was a time when wickedness did not prevail in the earth exceedingly; and the Lord declares, not only of the generation that was swept away by the flood, but, by his unerring knowledge, of all succeeding generations, "That the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth:" Gen. viii.; and he assigns this as a reason why he will no more curse the ground, nor smite again every thing living as he had done. Agreeably to this account of Moses, the Apostle Paul thus speaks of the natural circumstances of men, in all ages, independent of any particular considerations of times and circumstances. "They are altogether become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good: there is none righteous, no, not one: there is no fear of God before their eyes." Thus does it appear, that all men are evil and corrupt in their natural state, dead in trespasses and sins.

But this is not all: Guilt is connected with punishment; therefore we are by nature children of wrath: "The wages of sin is death:" and so it appeared on the commission of the first sin. It requires just ideas of the holiness of God to see these things aright. For want of such ideas how many still murmur against his righteous dealings.

The Scriptures inform us, that no sooner had Adam sinned, than he and all the human race, whom he represented, and who were virtually in him, lost the divine, lovely, image in which they were created; and became obnoxious to the wrath and eternal vengeance of God. Three or four express passages shall be given on this head; but the Bible is full of proof, so full, that the whole scheme of Christianity rests entirely on this foundation. "Destruction and misery are in their ways." "By the offence of one, judgment came on all to condemnation." "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners." Moreover, the righteousness of this dispensation of God flows from the nature of the covenant of Works, which says, do all that the Law requires, and thou shalt have eternal life; but the soul that sinneth shall die. This covenant made by God with all men in Adam, cannot admit of any mitigation, because of the justice and perfect purity of the Almighty. He would cease to be just, if he justified any persons upon terms less than perfect obedience. An imperfect righteousness is a contradiction in terms. No such thing can exist.—One single sin must mar all pretensions to righteousness. A great reason, why man's miserable state by Nature, and the way of recovery by Grace are not understood, is, because it is too commonly supposed, that there is a covenant of sincere though imperfect obedience, through which men are to be saved by doing what, with a vague confusion of ideas, is usually called their best;—and that Christ is to make out the rest for them. So long as this pestilent notion prevails in the mind, I absolutely despair of any good being

done.—It is hard to say whether it is most affronting to the PURITY or to the MERCY of God: for it quite obscures both. Here is neither Law nor Gospel; neither the covenant of Works nor the covenant of Grace, but a vain attempt to mix them together. I would beseech those who still hold fast this notion, to pray earnestly for divine wisdom, and seriously to search the Scriptures. Let them not take it positively for granted, without examination, that WHAT THEY HAVE BEEN BROUGHT UP IN MUST BE RIGHT. There have been those who were as positive as you, who yet through Grace, have been made to see their error. Sure enough a true conviction of sin, and some real measure of self-knowledge once attained, will demolish all this scheme, which, indeed, has not a shadow of a foundation in Scripture.

There never were but two Covenants; the first of Works, which requires perfect obedience: It was made with us all by nature in Adam. The second Covenant is the Covenant of Grace, which says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;" and which effectually comprehends all who fly for refuge to it. In both cases, God sees such an union between the representative and the represented, between Adam and his natural posterity, between Christ and his spiritual seed, that he views it right to impute death and destruction on the first account, and eternal life on the second. And it is utterly unreasonable for any man to say, that such a procedure is UNRIGHTEOUS, when the infinite God, who alone must be a proper judge of the nature of both these unions, declares it to be

RIGHTEOUS. Let any man examine the 3d, 5th, and 10th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, where the two Covenants are plainly set forth, and not even the possibility of any middle covenant is allowed. So that, under one or the other of these two Covenants, we all are, and shall be found at the last day: and, let any man take care how he fancy to himself a middle rule by which God should try him, when, in reality, no such rule exists. These then are the circumstances of mankind. These are the considerations with which every man must begin, who would understand what Christianity is to do for him. He is guilty and condemned: he is evil and corrupt altogether, having lost both the favour and the image of God: what a death must that be? —to live without God, and to have God for his enemy.

But besides condemnation and corruption, there is a third particular which ought to be mentioned, and then the account of man's natural misery is complete; and that is his IGNORANCE. Wise as he may be in worldly things, with respect to God he has no knowledge. The readiness with which the human invention of a Covenant of imperfect obedience is received and embraced by men, not only without Scripture-proof; but directly against it, though they profess to believe the Scriptures, is a flaming proof of their ignorance. But it is written "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; the way of peace they have not known, there is none that understandeth." O piti-

able state! We come into the world heirs of wrath and ruin. We love our chains and darkness, and call them liberty and wisdom. We are the children* of the Devil, and his will we do. Harassed and tormented with a thousand lusts and evil tempers, every one of which has misery and bitterness in its nature, we yet refuse to part with them. I do not seek to overcharge this dismal picture, for I cannot do justice to it. The very way of deliverance,—that God should become man, and that Jesus Christ should suffer and die,—ought to teach us that the evil is extreme indeed, which required such amazing expedients. And if you be not sensible of the evil, you will not regard the remedy. GENERAL notions about the disease and the remedy will recover none: There must be a particular application of these subjects to the conscience.

I have gone through my first particular. Let each forget other people, and suppose himself the party concerned, just as if he only were fallen; he only needed a remedy. What, know you then yourselves to be thus guilty? Is the burden of your sins intolerable? as you may have confessed in the Sacrament service. Do you FEEL your misery and blindness by nature? Is it with you not a matter of reasoning, but of fact, that "the imagination of your heart is only evil from your youth?" Do you feel evil to be evil,—seeing at the same time the beauty of God's Laws, and your own contrariety to them? If so, God has been with you in bringing you on thus far in conviction of sin. Give him the

* John viii. 44. Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. See also 1 John iii. 8, 9, 10.

glory of his justice; plead guilty, and observe what he has to say to you. You have done with the covenant of works, you have nothing more to hope from it through eternity. Those, who are not brought to this, have nothing to do with what follows; cannot believe in Christ. But O! that I could do justice to my text, and its delightful subject. God has given to us a gift, called an UNSPEAKABLE gift. But to whom is it given? To all men who will accept of it; for thus runs the declaration, which makes the remedy, in its sufficiency, as universal as the evil. "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life:" and again, "God will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth: there is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." Let no man therefore who is convinced of sin, according to the first head, exclude himself, since God plainly excludes none. If we perish it is our own fault; "ye will not come to me that ye might have life," says the Saviour.

I have reason to be studious in clearing up this point, in the first place, because what signify grand descriptions of God's unspeakable gift, to the comfort of those who are strongly possessed with a notion that Christ did not die for them? I fear many penitent sinners HAVE been and ARE distressed with such views; but were they simply guided by Scripture, under the power of the Holy Ghost, the answer to this distressing doubt is very short and

plain. "He gave himself a ransom for all," and therefore you, being one of the whole, cannot be excluded. The road being thus free and open, weigh, my fellow-sinners, with me, what the gift is. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." Did you ever consider what this gift is? It is not GIFTS but GIFT. We have many, very many gifts from God;—creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, for which we ought to thank him; but the gift, here spoken of, is greater than all; 'tis UNSPEAKABLE. I will tell you what it is in St. John's words. "God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." So that this is, in short, the gift that God has bestowed on men, his own Son, and in him eternal life. Think of happiness, and of happiness through eternity, and then say, is not the gift unspeakable? Is not the good will, is not the liberality, of God, towards such vile unworthy creatures as we are, unbounded? View, then, this precious personage, the Son of God; for, by receiving him, as the chief object of our affections, eternal life is obtained. The new Covenant is made with him for us, and he is the surety of its promises. The character of this Covenant is often displayed in Scripture. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Here you have Christ as your High Priest, in heaven, interceding for you. Christ having put away all sins by the sacrifice of himself, and been made sin for us, we are made the Righteousness of God in him. This is the Covenant of Grace. We are guilty: We cannot have a title to life eternal by any imperfect obedience; but Christ

has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, and is the Lord our Righteousness.

Thus, by virtue of the union between us and Christ, " the love, wherewith the Father has loved him, is in us, and he in us." What a foundation of peace and triumph, eternal triumph, to the soul is this! We obtain not only pardon of sins, but justification before God, being treated as REALLY righteous by imputation: and that not on the precarious condition of our obedience, (that would ruin all with such creatures as we are) but on conditions which Jesus has fulfilled completely for all, who receive him with " hearty repentance and true faith."—This is Christ, our hope of glory. This is God's gift of ETERNAL LIFE—Eternal life, which Jesus has merited for us. Well may it be written, " surely shall one say in the Lord have I righteousness and strength, in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory. Israel shall be saved in the Lord. Ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded." O my fellow-sinners, should not this be music to our souls?—Say,—does not grace abound much more than sin hath abounded, in every view?—not only to remove sin, but to convey the gift of RIGHTEOUSNESS, and through righteousness eternal life to us guilty rebels. Thus Jesus hath delivered us from the wrath to come: Thus this office of Christ, as our Priest, fully corresponds with the guilty state of man.—

And his office of Prophet answers as well to our blind and ignorant state. The promises of the Covenant of Grace, with reference to his prophetical office, run thus, " all shall know me from the

least to the greatest." Hear how the great prophet himself speaks. " No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." " I will bring the blind by a way that they know not, I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight." The very description, here given of the remedy, supposes that the disorder is felt and understood in the manner I have described. If men are not obnoxious to the wrath to come, they need not Jesus to deliver them; and if they are not blind they need not Jesus to enlighten them, and to shew them the Glory of God. The reason, why so few are heartily thanking God for his unspeakable gift, is, because so few feel their want of it.

The same observation may be made on the third office of Christ, as our King, the promise of which runs thus: " I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." O precious promise! completely answering to the third branch of our natural misery,—the total corruption of nature. Pride, anger, malice, covetousness, lust, unbelief, self-righteousness, are dreadful evils in themselves, setting aside divine wrath. No man can be happy under the power of them. To the enlightened conscience they are perfect misery. Oh! then receive Christ as your King. Do not plead your being so bad and dead-hearted, for that very reason you are to receive him, that he may sanctify you from the World and the Devil. This work is not yours, but his. You engage him to do it for you when you believe in him. O precious

gift! view it altogether. View our lovely Christ, as King, Priest, and Prophet. Receive him in all his offices. THIS is the unspeakable gift of God, even Christ, and through him eternal life. This is the wedding garment of the Gospel. You put it on when you put on Christ in all his offices; for then you are made happy, wise, and holy. It is, however, little of him that is felt or enjoyed HERE in comparison of what will be felt or enjoyed in the next world. Let eternal life be kept in view. Jesus is "the true God, and Eternal Life." Whether you consider the infinite dignity of the gift, "God manifest in the flesh," or the riches of eternity conveyed to us thereby, surely you will say with the Apostle, in our text, the gift is UNSPEAKABLE.

Stop here and ask, "What think ye of Christ?" Do you understand this Salvation? this Grace? these offices of King, Priest, and Prophet? Do you understand how this whole scheme is for the benefit of corrupt, guilty, and ignorant creatures? You will not come out of the covenant of works into the covenant of grace, except you thus discern the Glory of Christ. You will not receive the gift unless you know it as a gift, free for the wretched, without money and without price. But how shall this gift become mine? says the awakened sinner, who feels his need and sees its value. Here is a point of the most interesting nature. Oh! God be with us here! "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. Verily, verily," saith our Lord, "he that believeth on me hath everlasting life. As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to

them that believe on his name. Whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely." Christ is the wedding garment in the Gospel—Christ in all his offices of King, Priest, and Prophet, as hath been explained. He must be put on as a garment for covering and defence: And there is no way of putting him on, but by believing on him. Faith is the soul's consent to receive Christ, to do for us, and to be to us, all that is promised. In brief, faith hears what he promises, and trusts in his word. I need not dwell any longer on the description of faith. The matter is simple and plain to the awakened soul, that feels its own need, and is longing for redemption; and a prolix description will be more likely to cloud than illustrate it.

Let us never forget that the unspeakable Gift of Christ is a GIFT; and as a gift it is to be received. Repentance consists in that very low and humble state of mind, which becomes him who needs to be saved by grace: Therefore repentance always goes hand in hand with true faith. But shall a man wait till he has done something to pacify God, before he trusts in Jesus for Life Eternal? This is to be looking for salvation by the works of the law; and they that do so are under the curse. Nothing then is required of thee, in order to become wise, holy, and comfortable, but, according to this explanation of the true intent and meaning of the Gospel-scheme, to accept the gift and believe. And if thou know thyself, and thy impotent, dead state, thou wilt know that faith in Christ, in the first place, is necessary in order for purifying the heart, for victory over the world and the Devil, for peace of conscience, and

for love. It is a black mark on a nation when faith in Christ is despised, and looked on in a mean light. An Apostle could, with elevated joy, thank God for his unspeakable gift. But it was by faith only that he was put in possession of it. Hear his words at the close of his Sermon at Antioch, and may every heart amongst us give them due attention. "Be it known unto you, Men and Brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by Him, all that believe, are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the Prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Acts xiii.

And thus the question is answered, how shall I obtain the full benefit of this unspeakable gift for myself? I am blind, how shall I know God aright? I am guilty, how shall I have peace? I am corrupt, how shall I get my nature sanctified? All these wants are promised to be supplied in the unspeakable gift of Christ,—the King, the Priest, and the Prophet, as above explained. Receive this gift by believing on Jesus, or trusting in him for it, and all is thine. But, as simple as this appears, few are brought to it: and those, who are, are brought to it with difficulty; for it requires the exertion of Almighty Power to make a man thus willing to be saved. And, that those, who are desirous of appropriating this gift may be certain that this way of believing is the way, the only way, I would, besides

the direct Scripture arguments brought for the use of it, observe two things.

First: It is not possible that there should be any other method of conveying the unspeakable gift, but this of believing; because the way to God is shut up by the covenant of works. Besides our own numberless actual transgressions, and our own incessant in-dwelling corruptions, we come into the world breakers of this covenant, and born in sin. The union between us and Adam has ruined us already. "By the offence of one, judgment has come upon all men to condemnation." It is too late to think of remedying our case by any works whatever. Turn you to Christ a new head and a better surety. He is the unspeakable gift of God: you must be "broken off" from Adam, and made one with Christ, that so you may have righteousness and eternal life, by imputation; as you have already condemnation by imputation in Adam. The covenant of works ruins your souls: The covenant of grace offers to save you. It has "come upon all men to justification of life." But how? All will not be saved; only those,—who commit themselves to it,—who make use of it: and, how is this to be done but by believing? If you use not this method you are under the law of the covenant of works, condemned already; and, whatever you do can only swell the account against you at the last day. Thus faith is the only possible way of obtaining this unspeakable gift; and though it is, and must be, wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit, yet to believe is nevertheless a duty, in the performance of which we are as much bound to use all diligence,

and to exert our rational faculties, as in the case of any other duty whatsoever. Thus it is written, "This is his commandment, that ye believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that ye love one another."

Secondly: The necessity of faith, as the means of being interested in the unspeakable gift of the Father, is plain from this consideration, that till you believe, nothing can be done, that is right in the sight of God. For, "without faith it is impossible to please God." No acceptable obedience can be fulfilled, till faith in Christ is exercised. But, let a man receive the gift by believing, and he sets to his seal that God is true. Let men pretend that this is licentiousness as they please; but the godly, whose judgment is alone worth regarding, in the things of God, know that He will fulfil all the promises of the covenant of grace. "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts," is among these promises. Safely may we leave to God the consequences, which he has taken upon himself. "The Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation," must and will "teach men to live soberly, righteously, and godly."

To finish then the doctrine of this head. He that would possess this unspeakable gift, must believe, and by believing receive it. Inquire, I beseech you, how it is with you? Have you, with these views of Jesus as a Saviour, fled to him for refuge? Have you received him? Have you found any beginnings and first fruits of this life eternal in your soul? If so, they are the earnests of more to come. For, "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Happy are you if Christ, God's unspeakable gift, is yours. And he bids you, by the Apostle Paul, to be "confident that he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

But if you are to this day utter strangers to this gift; if hitherto you have seen no beauty in Christ, that you should desire him, what shall I say to you? Year after year, God has offered to save you; yet you receive him not, you will not believe in him: Therefore the imputed righteousness and eternal life, which you despise, is not yours. A little breath only keeps you out of Hell. You will have nothing to do with the covenant of grace; and therefore you are under the covenant of works, and it will ruin you for ever. "Say I these things as a man," or saith not the word of God the same also? "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. Oh! Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and so ye perish from the right way."

Lastly: It is asked, Are men called upon to do any thing else besides believing? Yes, they are. When through believing they are restored to life and peace and the knowledge of God, they are called on to be thankful. "Thanks be unto God." Then God gets his glory upon them, "the praise of the glory of his grace, by which he has made them accepted in the beloved." This is the debt they will be paying to all eternity. Thus God hath all the honour of our salvation, and we the comfort.

"Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." To employ your renewed faculties to the honour of God, and to serve him for ever with love, in thought, word, and deed,—this is the way to express your thankfulness. For to pretend to thank God with words, and yet dishonour him with our conduct, is impudent hypocrisy. Thus have I at length shewn the force and the propriety of the Apostle's words in the text, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift."

I conclude with a word of application. First; I would speak to all those who are dead in sins. Do you ever thank God for the unspeakable gift of his Son? Do any ever hear you speak the hearty language of love? Do your actions shew it? Are scoffing and sneering at faith in Christ, and at those who profess it, marks of your regard to Christ? Are your coldness and neglect of all the ways of openly knowing Christ, signs of your hearts being affected either with your need of such a Salvation, or the worth of Christ as your Saviour?—To come closer still—Did your hearts ever commune with God seriously on the footing of this new covenant? Did you ever put your trust in Christ so as to commit your souls to him in direct acts of faith? Know you any thing of the peace or joy in believing, so largely spoken of in Scripture? As your works are dead, so is your faith. I would tenderly entreat you not to ruin your souls. Christ is offered to your acceptance; you are lost without him. All excuses arising from the sense of difficulties, in the way of religion, are out of the question; because

he offers to be all, and to do all for and in you. Will you accept this offer, or will you not? Shall Christ, this day, be your Prophet, Priest, and King? What say your hearts? Do weigh this matter. It deserves private prayer and meditation, and is not to be treated in a careless way. If you receive him, he certainly will do his part. If you receive him not, your ruin will be at your own door.

Secondly; Let humble souls, sensible of their lost state by nature, fly with speed to Christ. He invites you. Boldly venture on him, and remain in that city of refuge, where you will be safe.

Thirdly; Let believers study always to be thankful. Then God gains his end, the praise of the glory of his grace. Amongst other ways of shewing your gratitude, neglect not that of liberality in relieving the poor, according to your ability. The text is brought in on occasion of this subject. The motive is thus expressed in the foregoing chapter. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."

SERMON IV.

THE NATURE OF FAITH.

Heb. ix. 1.

Now Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

THE Apostle had been observing, at the close of the foregoing chapter, that "the just shall live by faith," and he spake of true Christians as of those who believed to the saving of the soul. Here he tells us what faith itself is. It substantiates things hoped for, it realizes things invisible; giving such evidence of their reality to the mind, that the believer is influenced as if he saw the objects; and thus he walks by faith, as if by sight. And the instances which the Apostle mentions in this chapter, in which he records the Worthies of the Old Testament, who lived by faith, illustrate this definition. Thus Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible." "Noah being warned of God of things not yet seen," saw the flood and the destruction of the world by it, in so strong a light, that, "moved with fear, he prepared an ark for the saving of his house." He, who believes God aright, hears, sees, feels, as it were, his word to be true, both the promises and the threatenings; believing both, and acting upon both. Not that faith is, even in the truest Christians, equal

to sight, in its sensible influence; but it is its nature to resemble sight. It is also opposed by much unbelief and the natural perverseness of the heart: But its tendency is to realize things invisible, and to give them a present substance in the mind.

This is that divine principle wrought by the Holy Ghost, which enables men to overcome the world, and by which men may live to God. For the faith, so highly commended in this chapter, does not mean a mere assent to revelation, in general, with which so many content themselves. The faith, here spoken of, is wrought by the Spirit of God, unites a man to Jesus Christ, and makes him to act as a New Creature. I observe that many complain that their lives are not so good as they ought to be, who yet make no complaint of their faith. It is a very common thing for men to be much under the power of unbelief, and yet to seem, both to themselves and others, to believe truly. They profess the Christian religion: They never examined the grounds of true faith; and because they have not doubted, they think they believe. What is to be done by such a sort of Christians? Let them, first, be convinced of their unbelief; and, secondly, let them learn the real power of faith.

1. In endeavouring to convince men of unbelief, I would premise, that I do not pretend to ascertain to what degree this unbelief amounts, because it is much greater in some than in others; and there is an endless diversity of cases. All I mean to shew is, that mankind are naturally prone to unbelief; and that even in Christian countries, so called, the great fundamental truths are not believed at all, by

many who profess them. Others, who may, in some sense, believe them, do it so very faintly as scarcely to feel their influence. Hence that faith, which is in the room of sight, is a thing little known and little felt in the world.—I would consider the three great sources of information on this subject, Scripture, experience, and the nature of things.

If you look into the Scripture you find the sinfulness of men is constantly ascribed to unbelief. The people of Israel, in the wilderness, are an emblem of mankind in general. In Moses's history of them you see what men are, and what are the ways of Divine Providence. Miracles on miracles do not convince them so thoroughly of the Providence of God as to induce them to trust in him. After repeated deliverances, they murmur and disbelieve, as if he had done nothing for them. "He smote the stony rock indeed, that the waters gushed out, and the streams flowed withal: but can he give bread also, or provide flesh for his people?" And that which provoked the Lord particularly was, that they trusted not in God, and hoped not in his salvation. If there had been any thing of the realizing principle of faith, they would have set the God of Israel against the gigantic sons of Anak; but it is evident that they did not so, by their total unbelief, and by their proposing to return to Egypt. If you wonder they could be so unreasonably unbelieving after such miracles, recollect what He said who knew what was in man, "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

What reason have YOU to think you would not have acted in the same manner, who daily show a disposition to disbelieve God, both in his Word and in his Providence. Indeed in this point a true believer is remarkably different from him who has no divine faith at all. When men begin to have some real faith, they begin also to be sensible of much unbelief; and those who have no real faith, are apt to imagine they have sufficient. The root of the sins of Israel in the wilderness is described as consisting in unbelief; and this secret evil of the heart, which I would wish you to detect in yourselves, is the true cause of the horribly gross sins and vices which fill the world. Did the people of Sodom believe the divine threatenings of destruction? No, they enjoyed themselves in security, till fire and brimstone rained upon them, and destroyed them all. In the case of the flood the warning and preaching of Noah during one hundred and twenty years were not believed. Men saw the heavens and the earth, the weather and the course of nature just the same, and would conclude that it must be an absurd fancy in Noah to build an ark. Do not you see how prone men are to trust to what they feel and see and hear, and to discredit the testimony of God? They believed at last, indeed, both in the one case and in the other. When the fire and brimstone were poured in torrents from heaven upon the cities of the plain, where Lot dwelt,—they believed. And when the waters of the flood prevailed in the days of Noah,—they believed also. But this is to trust our own senses, not the declarations of God; and it is such a trust as brings no honour to God nor

profit to man. Such a trust, or rather such a conviction, wicked men will have, when they shall see Christ at the day of judgment, and shall hear him say, "Depart, ye cursed." For, as men mocked before the flood, so do they now mock, and will continue to mock until the day of judgment, and the last destruction of the world by fire. We have "scoffers walking after their own lusts, saying, where is the promise of his coming? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were." Indeed when we are told that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him," we are taught that men are naturally unbelieving.

This same Jewish people, how did they disbelieve every evidence of divine truth concerning Christ! Even when wrath came upon them to the uttermost, they had not the least idea of their destruction by the Romans, as a punishment for their rejection of the Saviour. And, as there is no reason to suppose that the nature of a Jew is different from that of a Gentile, let us, in addition to the Scripture-evidence, which must respect Jews particularly, because they are the only people whose history is particularly related there, see what the experience of our own times testifies concerning the unbelief of mankind.

2. And here, the very existence of such a number of persons who, from age to age, have taken pains to depreciate the Holy Scriptures, and the encouragement which has been given to them, show with what facility men give way to a spirit of unbelief. And he, who seriously should weigh the extreme slightness of those arguments, or rather cavils,

which have been produced on the subject, will be convinced that men are partial in this cause, and readily disbelieve, because they wish to find the Scripture to be a fiction. Let any man, who has gravely attended to this matter, reflect only on the arguments for the truth of revealed religion which he has understood. How many, how clear, how unanswerable! And yet there are times when he finds himself almost overcome by the shadow of a cavil, to which he would be ashamed to allow weight in any other inquiry. These things show, that unbelief is natural to us; unbelief too most unreasonable, supported, as it always is, by the love of sin, and by evil affections and imaginations. What an immense quantity of instruction, and eloquence, and argument, from age to age, has been laid out in defence of true religion! Not in vain. God forbid: for God has a Church and Ministry; and by his Spirit, Word, and Ministry ever did and ever will support this Church. But how few the Converts, in comparison of the many who live in gross wickedness, or at least void of any serious religion! To what can all this be owing but to the natural predominancy of unbelief in the heart of man!

In one point, and that too of infinite moment, the unbelief of men is palpable. Where is the man who duly and fully believes that the punishments of Hell are eternal! They are so believed indeed by real Christians, who rely on the Saviour that delivered them "from the wrath to come." And this shows the importance of that awful truth. For how can men believe in, and worthily receive, Jesus

Christ, as delivering them from the wrath to come, if they neither believe the reality of that wrath, nor feel that they are justly obnoxious to it! In truly humbling the mind, and bringing it to a hearty acquiescence in the justice of the divine decrees herein; and in deeply impressing this same awful truth, lies no small part of that work of God's Holy Spirit, which "casteth down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." But when men begin really to think of the subject, what enmity, what hardness of heart, what pride, what impatience is felt in the soul! Perhaps, did the passions and prejudices of men stand as much in their way, on the point of eternal happiness, it might be found that they really believe as little of life eternal as they do of everlasting punishment.—Yet whether they believe it or not, both are described by the same lips of unerring Truth in one verse, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." But men have no objection to be eternally happy, though little knowing in what that happiness consists; and when something of its real excellent nature is laid before them, they are ready to call it foolishness; so far are they from believing what is revealed concerning it.

To a man wedded to his vices, what a prodigious, but false relief is it to think,—if he can persuade himself to think so,—that it is possible he may shun the worm that dieth not, and the fire that shall not be quenched. Under this notion how does the depraved spirit feel itself at ease in a course of sin! How charitable, and noble, and liberal does this

plan seem, which delivers a man from slavish fear of punishment, and allows him to practise sin without terror, though it insults the majesty and holiness of God! Then he has attained what many call, true liberty of soul. How in our times has this spirit grown to its height! If the depression and contempt of the Clergy were the only bad consequence of it, we ought to bear them with patience. But precious souls are, in this way, ruined to eternity. For let it be remembered that our Saviour in Mark ix, six times expressly asserts the eternity of Hell torments; and thence infers the duty and necessity of cutting off the hand and foot, and plucking out the eye that offends. If it be not true, what shall we say of him who has told us so? Poor wretched sinner, thy hope of being saved in thy sins is vain; as vain, as it is to hope that Christ, the eternal Truth, shall prove false in what he has said! Despair then of this hope, and seek, through His grace, to mortify thy vices.

3. And here I am led to consider the third source of information; the nature of things. What does this shew? Could men live so dissolutely and so carelessly through life, if they fully believed a future judgment, and the plainest fundamental truths? Men, however wicked, love their own interest. Could they live so boldly in sin, if they did not hope, in one way or other, to escape the wrath to come? How they are moved in temporal cases of gain or loss is plain. And though some will go on in a course of vice with the probable prospect of temporal ruin before them, yet they are not quite certain of this ruin: they flatter

themselves with hopes of escaping. But if men really believed the word of God, there could be no hope of escaping, not the smallest hope, not a shadow of possibility, because God is true. I cannot account then for their easy course of wickedness but from this cause: They do not believe that God will punish them eternally in hell: They hope he will prove a liar. And, as enough has been said to shew the commonness of this evil of unbelief, we are prepared to show,

4. The power of true faith. He, who would learn it, may now see the serious need he has of it on account of the corrupt propensity of human nature. And, as the poisonous effect of unbelief is plain, the wholesome effect of faith is as plain also. If there be a man here present who has felt the subject, and is discouraged at the difficult prospect of attaining true godliness and virtue, I say not to him, "Make strong resolutions to be good," and there end the business; but I would seriously warn him to take heed of an evil heart of unbelief, and assure him, that by overcoming that, and learning to believe, he will surmount all difficulties, cut the knot, and find success in his pursuits hereafter. Oh! Brethren, let faith be learnt, and faith will do wonders. Hear you what Christ says, "All things are possible to him that believeth." "He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." That, which many consider as Christian faith, and content themselves with, can never be the principle to which so great things in Scripture are ascribed, and therefore deserves not the name. To overcome the

world, to quench the fiery darts of the devil, to purify the heart, and work by love,—this is what Christian faith does. Nay, the Christian is said to live by faith, to stand by faith. Christ dwells in his heart by faith. He waits for the hope of righteousness by faith, receives the promise of the Spirit through faith, and, through the same Spirit, mortifies the deeds of the body. Can it be said then, that a man living in fornication, covetousness, profaneness, the neglect of all Christian duties and virtues, is a believer? Nay, suppose a man to live reputably and decently, but after the manner of the world; without communion with God, and without any love of him felt in his heart, or expressed in his life, so that neither in his family, nor business, nor conversation, he shows any reverence to God or devout affections—can it be said that this man is a believer? Impossible. All that can be said for his faith is, that he assents to the Christian religion in general. He never doubted of it, because he never seriously considered its nature.

Let such a man now begin to examine himself whether he be in the faith; and he is so far from a vital union with Christ, and the experience of forgiveness by his blood, and the renewal of his nature by the Holy Spirit, that there is great reason to question whether he truly and thoroughly believes the general truths revealed in Scripture. Does such a man, for instance, thoroughly believe that there is a life after this, either of eternal bliss or misery, a resurrection and a future judgment as described in Scripture? How comes he then to be so easy and careless night after night to lie down to

sleep, and not be afraid that he shall be in Hell before the morning light? For I must allow that, though the man is not a Christian believer, he has yet common sense, and knows therefore that it is possible he may die before the morning light. Yet he fears not the wrath of God, though he has no solid grounds at all to expect he shall be happy if he die in his present state. Yet see how anxious and eager he is about the world; how full of expectation about little trifles, about family affairs, about success in business. And with good reason, says he, my comfort in life, and the support of my family depend upon my success in business. The word FAMILY serves for a decent pretence to encourage or excuse his worldly spirit; for, it is fully evident, that those, who are in the same state of irreligion, are just as anxious and eager for the world, though they have no family, nor perhaps any person on earth whom they much care for. Indeed some show but too plainly that they care little for any person but themselves.

Is he then, whose head and heart are so full of this world, and so empty of God and the things of a future life, a true believer? Impossible. And recollect, when you begin, through convictions of conscience, and the wholesome strivings of God's Spirit, to be now and then somewhat alarmed; to pray on certain occasions, especially in great trouble or fear of death; how soon these alarms are apt to vanish; how easily you return to your former worldly cares and thoughtlessness of eternity. The fact is, you hardly believe the great truths of another life at all; you cannot keep up the serious

thought of them for a few minutes together. It is not so with us in things we really believe: we are affected with them; and cannot shake off the impressions, which they make on our minds. Whenever the spirit of true faith, by the effectual grace of God, its true and only author, takes hold of a man, he begins to feel the difference between real faith and that which is feigned. When once he thoroughly believes the majesty of God, the evil and the heinousness of sin, and of his own sins particularly, the reality of the resurrection and of the last judgment, and the certainty of that awful voice of the Judge against the wicked, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire," he loses his worldly cares and fears. They cannot now take up his mind. The great object, that fills his soul, leaves no room for worldly thoughts and desires to engross him. "What shall I do to be saved?" begins to be his anxious inquiry: Prayer becomes a real business; and attention to the word of God, read and preached, a most serious matter. He uses means of grace carefully; he abstains from sin so far as he knows it; and, while he feels the bitterness and the poisonous nature of sin, he loathes and dreads it, and is now longing to obtain forgiveness for the past, and sanctifying grace for the future.

Has the Spirit of God brought you thus far? Take comfort, encourage yourself in seeking God, through Christ. You will now find how much unbelief you had in you, when you knew it not and fancied your faith to be as good as it needed to be. And, to you who are in a truly serious, humbled, and penitent state, I dare appeal, whe-

ther you find it so easy a thing to be a true believer of God's word? For thus far I have shown the power of faith as it refers to the Law. It yet remains to speak of the power of faith, as it refers to the Gospel. To learn to receive truly that faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," you will find requires strength and light from above. Justified by Christ alone; regenerated by the Spirit; cordially believing the excellency and the preciousness of Christ, and his saving offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; and understanding the way and the manner of coming to God by him, you will enjoy peace of conscience, victory over sin, and success in the warfare against the flesh, and the world, and the devil. The knowledge of the pleasantness of wisdom's ways, the love of true holiness, and the earnests and foretastes of the heavenly kingdom, cheer the mind here on earth, by realizing things unseen, and by substantiating things hoped for. But all this you find difficult to be attained. It is indeed a great thing for a man to find, by experience, that the hope of eternal life, through Jesus, can cheer and comfort his mind under present difficulties; and that, by a thorough belief of God's gracious Providence, caring for him and making all things work together for his good, he can in reality "be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make his requests known unto God." However difficult all this be, because we are fallen creatures, moved by sense so much, and by faith so little, yet it must be confessed, there cannot be a more pleasant duty, in its

own nature, or more richly repaying him who practises it, than faith working by love. How light and easy is the soul that has attained a good measure of it! This lively faith brings to a man the consciousness of mercies received, which enables him to serve God with the pleasing constraint of gratitude.

True faith, if it cannot answer difficulties in the way of argument, can yet controul, overrule, and cut them short: "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?" and "He that spared not his own Son, how shall He not with him freely give us all things?" In the exercise of this faith the Christian feels his strength, and enjoys a divine taste and relish. What he before thought impossible, now becomes possible. Not because God and his Christ and holiness are changed; they must ever be the same; but because he himself is changed. And this very thought, namely, that such declarations of Scripture teach him to expect things directly contrary to the course of his natural feelings, may comfort the penitent soul, and encourage him to believe that God in Christ can "do exceeding abundantly for him above all that he can ask or think," and can "lead the blind by a way they know not."

And as to the great difficulty, "What right have I to expect such favours, and everlasting life?" True faith answers "Jesus is worthy; God gives eternal life to believers, and this life is in his Son." When this is truly and thoroughly understood, and the soul is encouraged hereby to cast itself on the broad mercy of God in Christ, freely offered to sinners, it shall be filled, in God's good time, with

peace and joy in believing, and so be fitted to live by faith in the Son of God. The same "Grace of God which bringeth salvation, teacheth us to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," with a spirit above the world, "Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." In the next life faith shall be exchanged for sight. The Christian shall be unspeakably happy for ever. But I am not preaching to him in that state. The enjoyment of God in Christ hereafter will give him lectures of holiness and bliss immensely beyond what we can now conceive. But I have shown, in some degree, what the power of faith is; what it can do for a man; how distinct it is from that poor dead speculative thing with which men generally content themselves; and how the Spirit of God works it in the hearts of men.

To conclude. If you have hitherto contented yourself with the name of faith, instead of the thing, I must say, however imperfectly I have handled this subject, that enough has been said to show you the danger of such a mistake. Give over your false hopes. Be earnest after a religion divinely comfortable, and such as will make you new creatures. Study the Law and the Gospel; and learn to be humbled by the one and comforted by the other, that you may believe to the saving of the soul. If you have learnt so far as to know yourselves to be blind, guilty, and miserable sinners; remember you are now to learn to believe in God's word of salvation by Christ. And in learning this, you will assure yourselves that God is better, infinitely better, to them that seek him, than they can conceive.

You; that have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, must find that rest and peace to your souls, which He only can bestow. And while you continue to maintain realizing views of Him, and the blessings He has promised, you will be enabled to fulfil every duty, to overcome every difficulty, and to resist every temptation.

SERMON V.

THE CASE OF PHARAOH, A WARNING TO STUBBORN SINNERS.

Exodus x. 3.

Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?

THESE were the words of the Lord, by Moses and Aaron, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, after the plague of the hail, and previous to the plague of the locusts. The hardness of this man's heart is notorious, even to a proverb: and, as the Story was dictated by the Holy Ghost for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come, my intention is, with the divine blessing, to consider some parts of it, and to intersperse such remarks as shall obviously occur, by way of application to the consciences of men. And may the Lord vindicate his own glory in our sight! May we see how the sin of refusing to humble ourselves before him, is the sin of sins! May we be led to take notice of the Lord's long suffering exercised towards us already, and so to take notice of it, as to be gladly content to have our humbling days in this life, lest, if we die in our pride, we go away into everlasting punishment.

"How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?" This was the point to which all Pharaoh's hard-heartedness was to be reduced. He was but a creature, the clay in the hands of the Potter. He needed only to be made sensible of his dependant state, and heartily disposed to give to his Creator and Proprietor the glory that was due to Him; and all would be well. God is love itself to his creatures; he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. Let Pharaoh behave himself dutifully as a creature, and he shall find the Lord a kind and bountiful Sovereign. This same controversy the Lord has with all wicked men at this day on account of their rebellion against the God that made them. He requires only men's hearts;—then peace and happiness will not fail to be their portion. But, while men will not give Him, what is so justly His due, they must necessarily be miserable: the perfections of God, and the nature of things forbid any other conclusion. In this humble dependant frame of heart Adam was created: In the loss of this consists the present corrupted state of human nature; and to recover men to this did Jesus die and rise again. All, that we have in view in preaching the Gospel, is, that this happy end be accomplished.

Simple as this matter is, and most reasonable in itself,—that man should be humbled before his God,—yet the corruption of nature and the wiles of Satan make it the hardest thing in the world, too hard indeed for any means, merely human, to effect. We are encouraged, however, to use means as the appointed way, in which the strength of the

Almighty may be expected, THAT STRENGTH, which alone can cast down imaginations, and the high things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, and bring every thought of men's hearts into captivity, to the obedience of Christ. One of the sorest evils belonging to this sad condition of human nature is, that those, who are evidently living in rebellion against God, will not see that they are enemies to his government and authority. They can see, perhaps, that others are; but are dexterous enough to avail themselves of some unessential difference in circumstances, and from that to conclude that they are in a far better state. Thus, what Jew, in the time of St. Paul, would not have owned, that Pharaoh was a wicked hard-hearted man. But did they see THEMSELVES to be hard-hearted? Far otherwise. They fancied themselves the peculiar friends of God. Yet if you look into Romans ix. you will find St. Paul compares the men of that generation to Pharaoh, though they professed to regard the God of the Hebrews, whom Pharaoh openly despised. The truth is, it matters not much what men PROFESS, if they go no further than mere profession. If the Jews showed as much hatred to God in their conduct as Pharaoh did, they were as hard-hearted as he was. And, at this day, what numbers will readily own that Pharaoh, and the Jews who crucified our Lord, were immensely wicked; not considering, at all, that they themselves, who think, speak, and live, in a quite contrary manner to the Gospel of Christ, are at the same distance from God as they were.—Let us then consider and apply some particulars in the conduct of

Pharaoh. His character may, perhaps, be found not to differ essentially from that of many wicked men in our own times.

In the fifth Chapter of Exodus Moses opens to him the divine commission, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness; and Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." Here is a declaration of war against the Most High. God, as Sovereign of the Earth, declares his will to his creature: the creature positively refuses to obey; asserts his independency,—rebel and traitor as he is,—and WILL ACT just the contrary. This is the state of every unconverted man. He lives knowingly in the breach of God's express commands. For instance, God orders that the Sabbath day be kept holy, that we should call it a delight, and honour him, not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words on that day. But, says the wicked man, "I, having been confined all the week, must walk or ride out for my health on that day, though you may call it breaking the Sabbath." Here is, you see, a strife, a war, a contest, commenced between the Creator and the creature, as real, and as likely to be dreadful in its consequences to the creature, as Pharaoh's disobedience was to him—"Thou shall not take my name in vain."—So saith God. No, says the wicked man's practice, I will curse and swear, I will every five minutes introduce the name of God in a careless impertinent way.—"Thou shalt not return evil for evil,"—thus

saith the Lord. No, says the unconverted man, I will use those well who use me well; but those, who use me ill, shall find I have a spirit to resent it.—"Speak ye truth every one with his neighbour." No, says the modern Pharaoh, I should be overreached and imposed on, I should not be able to acquire a livelihood, if I did not, occasionally, equivocate and deceive my customers.—People may make what excuses they please; and Satan is exceedingly ready to assist men in deceiving themselves; but, every one of you, who acts in this or in any other way of positive refusal to obey the will of God, expressed in his law, which you profess to receive as his law, is a rebel against God. Every such person has entered into a war with the Most High as really as Pharaoh did; and, that he is still alive and not cut off, is to be ascribed to that same mercy which long spared Pharaoh. "How long will ye refuse to humble yourselves before me?" the Lord may say of you as truly as of Pharaoh.

The next thing we find of Pharaoh is, that instead of complying with the divine commands in letting the people go, he made their bondage still heavier, by denying them straw, and yet insisting on their fulfilling of their task in making brick as heretofore.—At this day, a similar effect of the word of God among the hard-hearted, is by no means uncommon.—A preached Gospel is, perhaps, never indifferent in its consequences.—If it be not a "savour of life unto life," it will be a "savour of death unto death." Too many proofs of this, I fear, may be found in this congregation. If the Gospel hath not been efficacious in making you hate

your own sins, it hath, probably, made you hate the Most High, his cause, and his people, more than you did before you heard it. What a dreadful thing, that you should be able to hear Sermon after Sermon, ever hard and insensible; or if you were moved somewhat at first, that you should have gotten the better of your qualms of conscience! In that case you are fast advancing to the state of those, whose consciences are seared as with a hot iron. You used to feel remorse on account of such sins as you know to be grievous and horrible; and sometimes to make faint efforts to amend. But now you can practise them daily, and hear of eternal ruin, the certain consequence of living and dying in them, and be not at all affected. That indignation, which used to turn, in some measure, against yourself for practising sin, is now turned against God. You inwardly dislike his laws more than ever; you hate his people whose contrary practice rebukes yours, and you treat them as Ahab did Elijah. "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Hence you love to vex and torment them if you can, as Pharaoh did Israel; and if you hear a story tending to their reproach, you are pleased, for the opportunity it gives you of glorying over them.

We find afterwards, in the seventh Chapter, that Moses and Aaron deliver the same message again to Pharaoh accompanied with miracles: but, he regards them not. The river is "turned to blood;" but he is hardened still. The next plague is that of the frogs; but still he refuses to be humbled before the Most High. Let us inquire here what were the specious reasons that induced Pharaoh

still to hold out against the God of Israel. His Magicians turn rods into serpents, water into blood, and bring up frogs on the land of Egypt. Poor comfort one would think this, since they could add to his evils, without being able to remove one of them by the help of their enchantments. But the credit of the false gods of Egypt was now at stake; and Satan, it seems, was permitted to assist his agents, the Magicians, that the power of Jehovah, in the end, might be more fully manifested.

There is no way in which Satan more prevails, to discredit divine truth, than by these counterfeit works. At this day, wherever a real work of divine grace is carrying on, there Satan busies himself to set up some counterfeit, which, to superficial observers, carries the appearance of a real work of grace also. And, when this counterfeit work is laid open in its folly, its wickedness, and its hypocrisy, then cry the men of the world, "You see what these pretenders to religion are, they are all alike." Men soon persuade themselves to believe that which they wish. The real finger of God in the conversion of sinners they will not acknowledge. Any trifling argument serves as a specious pretence to justify their unbelief. Tell them of the holiness of the true disciples of Christ:—they can show, as they would persuade themselves, better men among those who do not hold such and such doctrines. Let them suffer affliction:—They will not look on it as a visitation of the Most High, speaking to them to turn to him, lest they perish: It might be "a chance that befel us," say they, with the Philistines of old, when they suffered on account of

the ark of God: If it were otherwise, why did not such persons suffer who are as bad as we; and why did such persons suffer also, who yet seem to be very religious? The whole tendency of their reasoning is to cast God out of their system of thinking and acting: for "the ungodly is so proud, that he careth not for God, neither is God in all his thoughts."

But we are apt to think it is a pity, that such and such stumbling blocks, of a hardening tendency, should have been laid in the wicked man's way. If they were removed, he might judge better, and see the glory of the Lord, and humble himself before him. I believe not. These stumbling blocks are not really the cause, that the man continues impenitent and unbelieving; they serve him indeed as OCCASIONS, at present, of maintaining himself in his wickedness; but the root lies deeper in the heart that "is enmity against God." Let these stumbling blocks be taken away; Pharaoh, and every natural man, will find or make others: or without any reason at all will still be obstinately bent against God, from positive depravity of heart. An infinite power only can cast down the strong holds of sin. Without that, sinners, when beat from one hold, will only fly to another: and their heart will be steady in the interest of sin.

The very thing, which you would think should have cured Pharaoh of his unbelief and impenitence, is granted. The next plague is that of the lice, and "the Magicians did so with their enchantments, to bring forth lice, but they could not: Then the Magicians said unto Pharaoh, this is the finger

of God." They yield, and own the superiority of God. Pharaoh though he has nothing to say against it, yet is hardened still in his heart, and "hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said," viii. 19.—I wish that instances of the same kind were not to be found among ourselves.—The character of Pharaoh is not uncommon. Every unconverted man in this house is a Pharaoh. When the doctrines of the Gospel, the corruption of human nature, justification complete, from first to last by faith in Christ, and the necessity of regeneration, are set forth among us, many say, they see not, but that men, who follow not these doctrines lead as good lives as those who do. Thus they harden themselves against the Lord, as Pharaoh did, because his Magicians were permitted, in some instances, to do the same works as Moses.

I may well compare these cases, since the workings of unbelief and of hardness of heart are the same in all ages, however different the circumstances may be. When afterwards this plea can no more be made; when the superior piety and holiness of men who profess the above mentioned truths, and the evident profaneness and immorality of those who oppose them, might show which doctrines are from God, according to our Lord's rule of judging by the fruits,—then what is the consequence? Too many, I fear, are still hardened as Pharaoh. Though they have nothing to say; though they cannot, dare not deny the finger of God to be with the Gospel and its peculiar doctrines, yet they will not humble themselves to receive them.

In the plague of the swarms of flies, the Lord made an evident difference between HIS people

and Pharaoh's people; yet is Pharaoh hardened and unbelieving still. The same was the case in the murrain of beasts. The boil follows, and the hail, and the locusts. He remains the same. And are not many like Pharaoh in this? They will be afraid of judgments. When sharp affliction comes upon them, they will pray, and make some outward reformation. Let them recover from a bed of sickness; let the impending danger be removed; and they will be harder than ever. Conversion, when real, is the giving up of the whole heart to God, without terms. While Pharaoh stands on terms, "Go sacrifice to your God in the land; only you shall not go very far away: I will not let you go and your little ones:" When after being more pressed he yields to the departure of their little ones, "Only let your flocks and your herds be stayed;"—This is not the submission of a rebel to his Sovereign. It is as the equal talking with an equal. While we keep back any thing from God we are not sincere with him. The Lord makes no account of Pharaoh's partial surrender,—as appears from the history. He treats him as one that still refuses to humble himself before God. And, while men WILL treat with God, in the same manner, and give up this and that bad practice, yet keep up others that are equally heinous before God, —they are unconverted. The allowed prevalence of any one known sin is sufficient to exclude them from the character of God's children. Sin, all sin, must be renounced, even the right eye that offends must be plucked out and the right hand cut off; else the Lord will say to us, as he did to Pharaoh, "How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me?"

There is another thing observable with regard to Pharaoh. Many mercies are shown to him. The Lord takes notice of the least humiliation. On Moses's prayers his plagues are constantly ended. Yet is he hardened still against mercies, as well as against judgments. After the three days darkness, comes on the last plague,—the death of the first-born. Here the Lord triumphs: Pharaoh, in a sudden fright, sends the people out, without exception or reserve. This puts one in mind of the strong resolutions and vehement cries for mercy of a wicked man on a bed of sickness; where there was no other principle, but the fear of hell.—I have seen such a sight, and how the false penitent, on an unexpected recovery, has returned to his evil ways, like the dog to his vomit. Thus did Pharaoh. The 14th chapter concludes his sad story. Thinking the Israelites were entangled in the wilderness, Pharaoh and the Egyptians blame themselves for dismissing them, and pursue. The end was, that they were drowned in the Red Sea. Then was fulfilled the word of the Lord; "he, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Sinners have often long warning,—but the Lord strikes at last, and when he destroys, it is without warning, and without remedy.

The conclusion is obvious, and shall be short.—O enemies of godliness. All ye who live in sin, whoever ye are, ye have had, this day, a remarkable portion of Scripture-history laid before you. May the Holy Ghost direct to your hearts the application of it! Ye have heard of a man, like yourselves, whom neither mercies could persuade, nor judgments terrify out of his sins. Is any curse so

heavy as that of a hard heart? yet such is yours; O ye, who know ye ought to "cease to do evil, and learn to do well;" and yet can go on unaffected, unmoved. Did we not all find the same evil in ourselves by nature, and view the universal mischief as the effect of the fall, we might sit down in inconceivable astonishment, at the perverseness, ingratitude, and pride of Pharaoh. But I have lost my purpose this day, if no persons be brought to feel, that they themselves are vile and guilty, even so as to resemble that wicked king. God says to you, "How long will ye refuse to humble yourselves before me?" Are you in love with ruin? "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." Sneer at godliness and godly people a little longer: Despise a little longer, with Pharaoh, the Lord's long-suffering. Harden yourselves, with him, against a few more warnings, and with aggravated horror you will suffer in eternity the wrath of an incensed God. But, oh! my soul would wish you to escape the wrath to come: Oh! that ye would even now humble yourselves before God, make no reserves, give up yourselves to him as unworthy rebels, and surrender at discretion. Lost and guilty, bowing the heart before him, take shame to yourselves, and give him glory, lying at his mercy, for him to do with you what seemeth him good. This is repentance:—which Pharaoh never knew; which you too are utter strangers to, while you plead any thing in excuse for your sins, and while you delay to seek the favour of God in his appointed way.

But if we come thus humbled, shall we find mercy? Yes, you will: as surely as God lives and

is faithful, you shall find that, which will make your heart rejoice for ever; and which when once tasted will make you think yourselves most unwise for having lived so long in neglect of it. If you ask what that is, I answer, come and see; it is to be found in Jesus Christ; "O taste and see, how gracious the Lord is." Jesus Christ died, that such as you, coming to God by him, and throwing the intolerable load of guilt on him, might live and enjoy God for ever. Oh! do not harden yourselves against God and his Christ, to your destruction. I entreat you, return, RETURN at length, to God by him, and ask "what must I do to be saved?" Make at length the favour of God and the Salvation of your Souls your grand concern; and the Spirit of Christ will lead you to peace, to holiness, to heaven. Were you ten thousand times greater sinners than you are, the blood of Christ can cleanse you from all sin; the power of his Spirit can carry you through all difficulties. Oh! that such a Saviour should live in heaven, so able, so wise, so gracious; and you not be persuaded to put yourselves into his hands. Oh! that you would, this day, begin to pray, from the bottom of your hearts, and take up, before God, the lamentation of a sinner. Begin once to pray. The Mediator in heaven,—all compassion as he is,—will present your prayers to the Father; and, by his intercession, will procure you sweet and comfortable answers. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Humble yourselves beneath the mighty hand of God, and he will exalt you in due time."

SERMON VI.

LOWLINESS RECOMMENDED, FROM THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

Phillip. ii. 3, 4, 5.

Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

It may be safely affirmed, that the Scriptures do indeed evince their divine Author, by their own light and power. Their doctrines and precepts, which are wonderfully agreeable to each other, and illustrate and strengthen one another, are so peculiarly noble and excellent, tend so evidently to the glory of God and the good of mankind, and are so perfectly distinct from those of any other religion or scheme of moralists, that, like the sun in the firmament of the heavens, they point out the Lord Jehovah to be their Author, and show to men his handy-work. This particularly appears in the precepts before us.

" Let nothing be done through strife, or vain glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of

others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

If these rules were but observed by mankind, it is plain, that contention and discord would be unknown, either in public or private life. Men would be actuated towards each other by pure love; and selfishness would be utterly banished. The tormenting throes of pride, covetousness, ambition, envy and jealousy, would then have no place. Each would view himself as an unworthy, VERY UNWORTHY, creature; for this lesson the knowledge of his own natural depravity would teach him. Christian precepts without christian doctrine are mere castles in the air: They grow out of it, and are supported by it altogether.

The first doctrine of the word of God is man's fallen and corrupted state by nature. He who sees this aright, sees God most holy and just; and himself most vile and evil.

By the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,—which is the second great doctrine,—there is opened a way of forgiveness and restoration to a new state, and man is put under the conduct of the Holy Spirit to be fitted for the society of the blessed above. In this light, if the sinner, in real humility and true faith, do but feel what he is, and what God in Christ hath done for him, must he not be thankful, and low in his own eyes? Must not a creature, who might justly have been left to perish in hell, and who, through mercy, is forgiven, and saved by grace alone, have done with seeking his own glory; and from the piercing view which he has of his own sinful nature, must he not be apt to think any one

better than himself? the reason is, he sees and feels his own corruptions in such a degree as he cannot see or feel those of any other person.

It will be said, perhaps, "ALL CANNOT BE THE WORST;" therefore he may be mistaken in putting himself down in the lowest place. We will not dispute this; only we wish there were not mistakes, on the contrary part, far more hurtful. To think too well of ourselves, through the great and deceitful partiality of our own hearts, is far more common. Certain it is, that the christian doctrine, rightly felt in the heart, has a tendency to make a man think himself to be worse than others; it is difficult for him NOT to think so. I do not say he is obliged absolutely to believe this of himself; but I say a true knowledge of himself will be apt to PRODUCE this effect: Nor will such a one be disposed to take pains to avoid the conclusion. For, he is then admirably fitted to "esteem others better than himself." The feeling of the doctrine, you see, provides for the practice of the precept. He will not seek his own glory but that of his master; and will, of course, be a man of peace; the great idol of SELF being now dethroned. How well is he then qualified to support the christian tempers of humility, peace, and love!

Every one owns, that these tempers are amiable and excellent: that they make the person, who cultivates them, happy; and, that they are of the most friendly tendency to mankind.—But herein lies our mistake: We would have all men to possess and cultivate these tempers without being acquainted, in their hearts, with the christian doctrine. Take

away the fall and redemption; and no soil will remain, in which humility, peace and love can grow. We have seen that these virtues shoot entirely out of christian ground. Look where you please, besides, you will find no such precepts as these of the Text. The light of nature, corrupted and darkened as it is by sin and the fall, knows them not. We must go to Christ, fall at the foot of his cross as poor sinners, and learn them there or no where.

" Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Mankind are naturally selfish. We are desirous that every one should attend to us; and promote OUR profit, honour, or pleasure. Any man, who has examined his own heart with coolness and attention, must feel that he has within him this inordinate self-love. How heinous and strong appear injuries and wrongs done to himself! How light and trivial the affronts and unkindness which he has shewn to others! How clear and positive do men, who quarrel with one another about property, appear, each that he is right, when a third person can generally see that there are faults on both sides. Time would fail in an attempt to show the abundance of the proofs of this selfishness, of which I speak. Men are so blinded by it, as to claim a most unreasonable regard from others: And while they give their tongues all liberty in speaking contemptuously of other men, they are amazingly hurt that any person should speak contemptuously of them.

These things, which are moral evils, and which any thinking person may feel to spring spontane-

ously from his own heart, certainly do not arise from custom or education,—though they are often much increased by them;—but are as natural to a man as it is to breathe. Look at man in his infant state. Before your child can speak, this selfishness is discovered. He would be lord and tyrant;—all must submit to him. Hence children quarrel with each other as naturally as they breathe. Because all are disposed to domineer and none to submit, they cross each other's will; and hence arise envy and rage.

Against this selfish spirit, hear how divinely the Apostle speaks in the Text. He speaks to CHRISTIANS, to men, who feel the power of christian doctrine, who have tasted the love of Jesus, and been humbled because of their selfishness, for which HE has made atonement by his blood. Thankful for the redemption which his blood has bought for them, they feel themselves now called upon to imitate this example, in forgetting SELF, and in promoting sincerely the good of their brethren in genuine love. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus:" The mind of humble condescension and sincere love. United to Christ by the participation of his spirit, and expecting ere long to be with him in heaven, they labour on earth more and more to resemble him. O blessed Religion! which alone cures human miseries, cultivates humility and love, gives men an object to trust in, and an example to copy after in the Lord Jesus Christ, and restores them to the right knowledge of God and of themselves. Any man, who views these things right, will feel, that this is TRUTH, this is happiness, this will make a man wise and happy to eternity.

But we must become deeply sensible how contrary we are, by nature, to all this, and learn to hate and despise ourselves on account of the opposite dispositions, if we would learn Christian doctrine and feel its practical influence. While we cherish flattering thoughts of ourselves we can learn nothing of this sort; and therefore, when persons, who have heard the truth, concerning man's baseness and Christ's excellence, plainly pointed out, will not give way to conviction, but suffer the pride of their hearts,—which cannot endure the idea of a man's thinking meanly of himself,—to stifle all just sensations of these things, they confirm themselves in evil, and hinder their own conversion and their own happiness; for a plague to himself man must to eternity be, while he remains the slave of selfishness, and pride.—The Text has now been opened; will you permit me to apply it for your good?

1. I see persons in a mere state of nature, averse from Christian principles. To such I can apply the Text, only by the rule of contraries, and endeavour to show them their misery and their danger.

2. I see others who have obtained some Christian light and notions, but yet are destitute of any true spiritual apprehension of them. I must show such the marks of their bad state also.

3. I see true Christians practising these precepts, and expressing the force of Christian doctrine in their tempers and practice.—A suitable word must be addressed to each class; and may God bless it to their souls for the conversion of the unconverted, and for the growth in grace and improvement in real holiness of the truly religious, to all eternity.

First, I address myself to the man who is in a state of nature altogether, without any light, or views, or profession of Christian principles. His life may be decent, his character fair, and his conduct in society, in general, blameless or even useful. Or, he may be scandalously immoral. Self, however, in either case, is his end, his grand object, his God. So wrapt up is he in self-love, that he has not any the least relish of living for the love of God or of his neighbour. If he do a kind and useful action to his neighbour, it is, with him, altogether lost, if he do not conceive of it as contributing to the aggrandizement of himself. He must be praised, esteemed, and extolled. He would have every one give way to his humour. He would cross others, but he would never be crossed himself. He will kindle strife and contention; but then others,—never himself,—are to blame. He desires to be honoured very much beyond his real desert, yet would be thought modest and humble. He cannot bear that other men should be preferred to himself, yet you must not call him a vain-glorious man. He naturally looks at himself as the most important of all beings; to whose satisfaction every one ought to contribute, as if he were more worthy than all others; yet, though he might, one should think, consider that others are as selfish as himself, he makes no allowances for their selfishness; but upbraids them for this very spirit, which he cherishes so much in his own temper. His love extends but little beyond himself, for though he may have some affection for his children and family, perhaps also for his country or his party, yet as he has been used to con-

sider these as parts of himself, his love is still but selfish. He is looking still at his own things, not at the things of others.

The pure love of his fellow creature he knows not; much less does he know any thing of the pure love of God. Thousands of favours he is receiving without thankfulness, and without any humbling reflections how unworthy he is of them. And, if God deny him any thing, which he has set his heart upon, he does not think he does ill in being angry. His heart frets against the Lord, as if God were merely his servant, and acted unfaithfully to his master. Oh! the pride and the selfishness of the heart of man! I have given you only a few touches of them. Every thinking person will feel the seeds of these things within him. Moreover, this selfish spirit so blinds the man, who is under its dominion, that he can see no beauty in God's government, except every thing contribute to his own entertainment, interest, or gratification. Hence he ever seeks to avoid thinking of hell and of everlasting punishment; but, if he does, at any time, admit these thoughts, he abhors them as shocking and unjust, instead of considering how unrighteous and ungrateful he himself is, to sin against infinite goodness, by indulging so unreasonable a humour, as though his own personal gratification or interest were of more consequence than the glory of God, and the happiness of all the rest of mankind. He has no idea of submitting to the wisdom of God. If he cannot fathom the divine dealings, they are, of course, absurd, or wrong. He will have no God but one of his own imagination, who shall be subservient to his ease and benefit, and will not controul him.

Is this,—which is the genuine picture of all unconverted men,—Is this, I say, to have the mind which is in Christ Jesus? He humbled himself exceedingly for our good. He was obedient to death, even the death of the cross, though he thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Can Christ look with pleasure at this proud selfish being, when he shall appear before him in judgment? Can there be any society or union between them? Impossible. "Depart, he will say, thou proud, selfish, wretched, being, and be thou united to those Angels who were not content with their first state, but rebelled against their Maker: Thou, like them, hast sought thy happiness in thyself, and not in God; theirs therefore be thy portion for ever." But, I speak to thee, now, O man, while thou art in the land of the living. I speak to thee, that thou mayest be converted and live. The great difficulty is, to be really persuaded that thou art in this sad, ruinous, and selfish condition. Pride is ever ready to supply thee with some false hopes and presumptions.—Now to every one of this character, I further say, You profess to believe the Scriptures to be the Word of God. Look then at the Text and read it over. It is a most beautiful portrait of the temper and spirit of a Christian. Its beauty can never be sufficiently admired. You cannot deny that he, who practises this, is a happy man, and such as a man should be. The small remains of man's original grandeur, consisting chiefly in the light of conscience, show you this. I may defy you to deny its excellence, and the bliss of the soul who possesses it. But surely, it is not yours. Your own interest, your own ease, your own praise, your own indulgence, your own

will and humour, these are the gods you worship. You are quite contrary to this humble, self-denying, loving spirit. You are in the bond of iniquity. Oh! that you felt it aright! But, are you sensible of it in NO degree? Do you not now, if you look within, feel that this is indeed your temper? Watch yourself during the next week only. Take notice, hour by hour, of the thoughts which spring up in you. Very many know nothing of themselves: They look not at home: They are abroad all the day long in business or in pleasure; and avoid thinking of their own hearts. Thus they take it for granted that their hearts are good, without examination. But, look, I say, within; and be convinced, from experience, as all honest inquirers are, that you are nothing but selfishness and unreasonable pride. In the mean-time, remember that all good men have known themselves to be thus vile. To GRACE, not to nature, they have acknowledged themselves indebted for the imperfect state of goodness which they have attained. The Lord declares, by Moses, that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." And the same is the testimony through the whole Scripture; for all revealed religion is built on this truth. When, therefore, you are once convinced from Scripture, what you are by nature, a great point is gained. Then, repent and believe the Gospel: and when you truly know Jesus, he will teach you to have the same mind which is in himself, and will fit you for his kingdom.—I beseech you, for your soul's sake, neglect not what has been said; but be wise for time and for eternity.

Secondly, Let me speak to such a one as, by

hearing the word of the Gospel, has, in a crude manner, acquired superficial notions of the doctrines of the truth; and, though a stranger to the faith and hope of the Gospel, fancies, that, because he holds the doctrines of the fall and of salvation by Christ alone, through grace, he must be right. His orthodox opinions he takes for faith, though he never came truly as a lost sinner to Christ; and his decent morality, though it flows not at all from Christian principles, he mistakes for the fruits of the Spirit. Thus he is doubly armed with a false hope. He thinks he has both faith and good works, though, in reality, he has neither. How is he to be tried? Turn not away in anger, I beseech you, from the charitable work, which is before me, of attempting to undeceive you, and thus to save your precious soul from destruction. But if any will not give a fair hearing, if any are so vainly confident that they are saved by grace, as to fancy that they need not try what manner of spirit they are of, their very unwillingness to be probed is itself a suspicious circumstance against them. Bring your state to the test: You cannot stand the test: Your fruits are even contrary to those of a sound Christian. You have the same, or as striking marks of selfishness as the man of mere ignorance whose case we have just before considered; the same covetousness, unreasonableness, envy, contentiousness, vain-glory, and pride. Or if you are altered in some respects, still your plan is SELFISH; though it may now wear a religious form, as it formerly did a worldly one. You expect to be honoured and looked upon as a person of considerable consequence in religion: You are

infallible as a Pope, and cannot mistake: You bear not the least contradiction with patience: You are ever apt to imagine your attainments in religion to be greater than those of others; and no one understands so well as you.—Is this lowliness of mind? Is this esteeming others better than yourself?

We have seen that a true knowledge of themselves leads men to judge themselves worse than others; more ignorant, more weak, more depraved than any; and we have seen how this conviction produces a humble temper of mind. Can it then be that your Christianity, which thus leads you to set up your Christian knowledge and experience above those of all others, should come from the same Holy Spirit which indited the sentence of our Text? "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves." Certainly, the Holy Spirit is consistent in his doctrine and precepts, and in his work of grace on the heart. There can never be this contrariety: So that if this self-sufficient spirit prevail over you to the end,—for a good man may be deceived by it for a time,—you will be proved to be without the mind of Christ; and, assuredly, the gentle and humble Lamb of God will not then own you as HIS. You are not concerned for the good of your Christian brethren, or of the Church of Christ in general; your own interests, even when of a spiritual nature, engross you. You dislike all religious conversation which does not minister to your praise; you love those that applaud and humour you, but cannot bear such as think that you mistake. And what is this but the religion of publicans and sinners, who love those only that love

them? Indeed, O man, you deceive yourself, and stand in need of learning the doctrines of grace in a very different manner. Go to the foot of the cross, and there confess your pride, your selfishness, and your unreasonable vanity; and beseech him, who voluntarily humbled himself there on account of lost sinners, to affect you deeply, towards your Saviour, with gratitude and astonishment, and to make you feel your guilt and wretchedness. For, you are not out of the reach of mercy. Let but pride have its fall. Better it should be NOW than hereafter. You must forego this self-conceit, which makes you obstinate in setting up your own judgment above that of others: You must learn to suspect your own attainments, especially in those things in which the pride of self-love is so much concerned, which evidently leads you both into uncharitableness of temper, and also into forgetfulness of every one's excellence but your own. May God himself do this for you! He can pull down the proudest spirit: and if he once do this, you will then feel the utmost obligation to him, though the mortification of your pride be bitter to your natural disposition.

3. And now, loving, humble-minded Christian, a word with you at the close of this discourse. You view yourself as most unworthy, as not deserving the name of a child of God. You feel yourself not even worthy that the children of God should look upon you as a brother. I seem to hear you moan in deep sensation of your soul, on account of the wickedness of your heart. Very evil indeed you feel it. Yet, this broken spirit is pleasing in the sight of God, who

will not despise it. No persons are so acceptable in his sight as they who loathe and abhor themselves. You are a man of peace, and sit down in the lowest place among the disciples of Christ. You are vile in your own esteem. You delight to honour the gifts and graces of all but yourself. Christ's mind is in you. But look more and more at him, who "being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant . . . . Wherefore God hath highly exalted him." This is the way to true honour. If Christ lowered himself so exceedingly, what is it for you, a poor worm of the earth, to debase yourself? The proud Nebuchadnezzar, after his humiliation, can tell you, that those, who walk in pride, God is able to abase. But let your self-abasement be judged of, not merely by words or strong passions, but by a lowly, meek, and humble temper and conduct. Go on, poor in your own eyes, and you shall be great in the kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever becomes as a little child shall be great in the school of Christ. Let the Church, let the World, see you grow in this grace; and, by Christian humility, put to shame, for ever, all false professors of religion. Live and walk close with Jesus. To abide in him, you know, is the foundation of all Christianity: Let his mind, therefore, be in you more and more: view his example continually; and copy it, that you may be fitted for his society to all eternity.

SERMON VII.

JACOB BLESSING THE SONS OF JOSEPH.

Gen. xlviii. 15, 16.

And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads.

JACOB, after a stormy life of various trials and hardships, in which he had, however, experienced singular mercies; and, what is best of all, had been enabled to walk before God in faith and hope, and in a growing fitness for the eternal rest of heavenly glory, is now about to close his eyes on this short-lived scene of vanity, and to go to the enjoyment of that God who had long been the object of his trust. His last days in Egypt had been quiet and serene, and he was conducted with a fair wind to the haven where he would be. His death-bed scene was refreshed with the sight of his beloved son Joseph and his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. In the fulness of his devout and humane affections, both which he eminently possessed, he blesses the sons of Joseph, and delivers a prophetic benediction on them both; though directed by inspiration to ascribe the pre-eminence to the younger. He foretels also the gracious visitation of his God, in bringing them back again into the land of Canaan; and takes

thankful notice how far his God had exceeded his most sanguine desires. "I had not thought," says he to Joseph, "to see thy face," I had given thee up as lost, "and lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed." He delivers also, in language worthy of divine inspiration, the blessings of God to his twelve sons; interspersing that very remarkable ejaculation in the next chapter: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." He had long waited and breathed after God in his pilgrimage: he was now going to him, and he yielded up the ghost in the faith of God's promises. And so much did there appear, in this whole scene, of the power of divine faith, that this act of blessing the sons of Joseph is mentioned, in the 11th Heb. as an instance of the spirit of faith. Other, and seemingly more striking instances of it, might be gathered from the life of this eminent saint; but then this was the last; and may fitly be considered as connected with and as closing the whole scene of his walk with God.

The solemn expressions in the Text deserve to be noticed very particularly. "God," says he, "before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk." He was a tried God, a family-God—with reverence be it spoken,—whom Jacob had served. The God of all the earth was HIS in special covenant; and the blessings he had promised to Abraham and Isaac were to run in Jacob's line. He had seen the beauty of holiness in the communion, which his father and grandfather had kept up with God, and had been enabled to tread in their steps. He eyed steadily his Providence during all his life;

and, amidst an amazing variety of trials and deliverances, had been helped to see his gracious and all-powerful hand most distinctly. He could cheerfully say, this God has "fed me all my life long." Nor was this all: He could add; "The Angel which redeemed me from all evil." The Lord is pleased frequently to call himself, in the Old Testament, by the name of the Angel. Jacob had power over the Angel and prevailed. "He found him in Bethel," even the Lord God of hosts, as Hosea tells us. This was the Angel of the Covenant; who, as the last of the Prophets tells us, was "suddenly to come to his temple," when he should take our nature upon him to redeem it from the curse of the fall.

It appears that wherever, in the Old Testament, the Lord calls himself the ANGEL, it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is particularly pointed out to us: And this is constantly done in language suited to his character. In the present instance what so proper to be said of him as this, "the Angel which redeemed me from all evil?" Is not this the very work and office of Christ? And what were all the temporal redemptions of his people under the Old Testament, but so many types and earnests of the spiritual and eternal redemption wrought for us. It was not one evil only, but ALL evil from which Jacob was redeemed by him. And he "redeemed ME." The Patriarch is not content with confined general notions, as many are, whose hearts are all for the world, and never came near to God, nor loved him, nor trusted in him for themselves. This holy man had wrestled with him in prayer, and had

found him, and partook of his salvation by faith, and was led by his Spirit. This is the God whom he entreats to "bless the lads." To him he commits them, and with him he leaves them. I may not enlarge further on scenes peculiar to Jacob and his family. Enough has been said to lay a foundation for a few observations, which I hope, by the blessing of God, may not be unprofitable to this congregation.

1. See here, Brethren, in what peace a real Saint can die. Yes, a SAINT. To the reproach of the present age, the term is much despised; but it is the proper Scripture term for a good man; one, who is not only moral, honest, decent, and humane, but a lover of the holy God: one, who is separated from the wicked world; a stranger on earth; a believer in the Angel of the Covenant his Redeemer; and a citizen of heaven even here, in faith, hope, and love. See such a one, in old age, just expiring. He recommends his dear children and his grand children to the God whom he had served. He fears not to leave the world: He has not a wish that can tie him to the earth any longer. He is going home, the child to his Father, from vanity to fulness, from a life of uncertainties to satisfying and eternal enjoyments. He cannot have a wish for his family, but that they may walk before the same God, who had conducted him all his days: They would find this to be their true wisdom and happiness. He gives a cheerful testimony to this God, as being true to his promises; and reflects with satisfaction on his faithfulness and goodness, which had all along attended himself. He has nothing now to do but to wait for his happy dismission.

Brethren, In all ages it is thus that Saints testify the goodness of God; and you never find any of them in their last moments repenting that they had served God, or accusing him as not true to his promises. The unconverted die in stupid sullenness, or in vain presumptions, or in anxious worldliness. In their end you may see the difference of their spirit from that of the children of God.

I wish we may hence learn, that there is a reality in the Christian religion, in the faith and the holiness of the Saints. It will be no pleasing reflection to you, in your last moments, to think you have despised the love of God and true religion. Nor will it profit you merely to say with a wicked man of old, "Let me die the death of the righteous." Live their life, seek God now in Christ that you may find him. You will then be able to say at last, "My heart and my flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

2. "Before whom my fathers walked." It is worthy of observation what, in his last moments, is Jacob's idea of a good man. He does not say my fathers were honest, generous men. Alas! It is the deep and general folly of these later ages to set God aside, in men's notions of a good life; and to mean nothing more by a good man than one who is moral, and has some amiable qualities. This has been the character of many a profane, graceless, impious, wretch. It is an unspeakable injury to true religion to represent things thus. How many even read not the Scriptures; how many attend not to any right ideas of their doctrines, and the worship of God, and the faith of Christ and true humility! They catch at some ideas of generosity, of

civil and social virtues, which doubtless are amiable and laudable, but which, without godliness, are insufficient to form the character of a good man. How long will it be ere you give up such ruinous notions? How long will you imagine that these qualities can entitle you to the favour of God? Cease to build your hopes on these sandy foundations: Learn from the Scriptures, that to be fit to die you must "walk before God," love, trust, serve, and delight in him, reverence and fear him. The Bible is the oldest book in the world; and in it you find Enoch and Noah are characterized as walking with God. Religion, Brethren, differs from other things, the growth and improvement of which depend entirely on human cultivation. IT comes from God: And this old language used in describing a good man is the right one. He, who "walks with God," is not only honest and moral; but fears God, and sets him before him, in all his ways. Oh! see to this, Brethren, and deceive not yourselves by false representations, however fashionable. Learn, from God's word, how to form your ideas of a good man; that you may, through grace, become such yourselves; lest you "see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

3. The solemn manner in which holy Jacob mentions his fathers Abraham and Isaac as walking before God, naturally points out to us the advantage of having had godly parents and ancestors. Are there any here with whom this is the case? You have then both heard and seen what true religion is. You are prepared, from family-observation and ex-

perience, to answer the abusive objections usually made against godliness. You know what it is; how awful, and yet how amiable; how pleasing, and yet how instructive. Remember you will have to give an account of the TALENTS* intrusted to you in this respect. Of what solid examples of real goodness, of what careful instructions, have you had the advantage! Then, what prayers have been made for you by your pious fathers and mothers! Could you not see how earnestly, how affectionately they longed for your conversion; with what pleasure they looked at every opening sign of your fearing God; how they grieved to see you backslide?

Ye, who have had these advantages, or now have them, remember the God before whom your fathers have walked, or are now walking, and seek to know him also for yourselves. When you hear stories told and believed, on all hands, of the follies and absurdities of godly men, you have an advantage over those who have not had your opportunities. You cannot be carried away with such prejudices. You know better, from what you have seen at home. And, if you have seen the faith, hope, and charity of the Gospel in your fathers or near relations, exemplified in life and death, say, are not you convinced that they were in the right; that godliness is no fantastic thing; but the highest wisdom? Do not you believe that their peace, and joy, and serenity, and moderation, and charity had a just foundation? Do not you believe that God was with them, and influenced them by his Holy Spirit? And whereas, they always told you, that it was not

* See Matth. xxv. 15—30.

of themselves, but by grace that they were what they were, that they knew themselves altogether unworthy sinners, saved only by Jesus; see you not that it is your duty to seek for the same heartfelt conviction of sin, the same lively faith in Jesus, and the same new birth unto righteousness which formed their christian character? An ignorant and idolatrous admiration of your fathers, without following their steps, will profit you nothing. You should look higher, and see, what the real doctrines are which, in them, brought forth such fruit, and what the real influence of the Divine Spirit is, for which they prayed so constantly, and directed you daily to seek. You have had living sermons in your own family, which demonstrate to you the divinity of true religion; and you should be both quickened and encouraged to seek the same grace for yourselves.

Even those, who cannot trace such marks of divine influence in their fathers, may yet see and know, and have abundant opportunities of learning, from the case of others, what true religion is. Look at those whom you have seen or heard of; unquestionably holy men in life and conversation; men, who, in the language of the patriarchs, and of the Text, have "walked with God." Inquire what their principles are. You will find them all to agree in the confession of their own natural wickedness, and in the renouncing of their own righteousness, and in trusting alone to the "Angel who redeemed them from all evil." They all fear and love the Lord God through Christ the Mediator. The FRUITS of a holy life any one may see: The PRINCIPLES of christian doctrines, whence they proceed,

many are very backward to see. But where christian faith and doctrine are despised, or neglected, or buried in oblivion, you will not find these fruits. However pleasantly and elegantly such men may talk of virtue, it is but talk: THEY cannot practise it, in whose hearts Christ dwells not by faith.

And methinks these considerations may serve to fortify young minds against the fashionable evils of the day. It is the fashion,—and young people catch it very eagerly,—to despise the examples of ancient wisdom and piety. The world, in its old age, seems now fallen into dotage, and sets aside all former maxims and rules. Men seem inclined to settle religion, government, and morals, quite in a new way; by new-invented theories; with an entire contempt of all that is gone before us. I shall continue, I hope, not to regard these extravagant theories, till I can see some better proof of their utility than hitherto appears. Young people are led by them into a high opinion of their own understanding. The fear of God and all the principles of christian doctrine; reverence for law and order, and a respectful attention to the wisdom and examples of our elders and forefathers,—these things are trampled under foot. Men's souls are much endangered by this spirit, and therefore I am in my right office when, from this place, I warn young people against them.

It is very probable that Esau, the brother of Jacob, falling in with ambitious and presumptuous spirits of this sort, learnt to be profane, and to despise the godliness of his fathers Abraham and Isaac. Observing that godly men were few com-

pared with the number of licentious characters, he would become more daring in impiety. The Spirit of God directed Jacob in a different manner. The lives of his forefathers Abraham and Isaac, even if there had been no good men in the world besides, deeply impressed his mind, and proved effective in showing him what a divine and excellent thing the fear, and faith, and love of God was. And he walked in their steps, and followed not a multitude to do evil.

To finish this third observation. Let young people attend to the godly examples of those who have gone before them. Let them follow their faith, considering the end of their conversation. Let them see how God was with them; how well they lived; and in what peace they died. Let them then compare with this the pretensions of new theories in religion, however plausible, and however generally supported by the great ones of the earth. Let them remember that experience is on our side; and, on the other side, mere reasoning without facts; in one case humility and the fear of God, in the other impiety and presumption. In the first, view a life of godliness and useful charity to men; in the other, an open contempt of godliness and high-sounding pretensions to charity, but without real fruit; unless sedition, impudence, ambition, and ostentation be the proper fruits of charity. To a well-regulated mind the contrast appears striking. Leave then new fancies, follow the old religion; and walk before the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: And, if your own families afford examples of this sort, look up to them with reverence and affection, and imitate them with diligence and resolution.

4. We may observe, also, what a blessed thing it is to have a God to depend upon, whom we can gratefully acknowledge as the God, who has fed us all our life-long unto this day. What a cheerful idea is this to good old Jacob! His life had been spent amidst a variety of sufferings: Yet he sees his God had always taken care of him: and in the crisis of his distress, from time to time, had stepped in to his relief, and heard his prayers. This is the God to whom he commits his children: a friend, that never forsakes those who depend on him.

And here let us learn, with Jacob, to adore the Providence of God, and to take notice of his hand in all that befals us. How Atheistic is it, to receive bounties from God continually, and to take no notice, to make no acknowledgements; to be even worse than the brute beasts! "For the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib," and a dog, in his own way, will show a grateful sensibility for kindnesses received. How much more than brutish is it, then, for persons to be fed to the full; and, for years, to have lived on the Providence of God, unthankful, senseless, proud, ashamed even to own any thing of God in their conversation, and ascribing to themselves what belongs to him. "My power and the might of mine hand have gotten me this wealth." Surely, to have been supported and fed by God all our days, though with many trials, if attended with a sense of the goodness of God upon the heart, is infinitely better than to have amassed thousands of gold or silver, and to have lived like Pharaoh, saying, "Who is the Lord?"

For, surely, that which sweeteneth life, that, which makes it grateful indeed, and substantially

cheers the soul, is this; to have God with us as a Father and a Friend. His loving kindness is better than life itself. And when he lifts up the light of his countenance, and grants us a sense of his favour,—this is blessed indeed! For meat, and drink, and worldly advantages of all sorts, cannot feed the nobler part of man, the soul. The love of God only,—however ridiculed by profane persons the feelings of it in the heart may be,—this only is proper food to the soul; and this only gives the right relish to inferior bodily comforts. Besides, life is precarious, and its duration like a shadow that departeth. What are you to do, when the things you set your heart on shall be taken away from you?—

Acquaint, then, yourselves with God in Christ: Seek him in the way of his Gospel; and, in following this salutary advice, you will possess the inestimable comfort of knowing him as the author of your mercies, and not be as those who live without God in the world. For this God is your God for ever and ever, and will be your guide unto death.

5. But when I consider the next clause, "the Angel which redeemed me from all evil," I am led carefully to distinguish the God of Jacob from the imagined God of those who are called Deists, or of any who believe not according to divine Revelation. The true God, who made heaven and earth, cannot be approached by us guilty creatures in any other way than through the mediation of Jesus; and we are too corrupt ever to bring our own hearts to a cordial acquiescence in this doctrine, without the influence of the Holy Spirit. And this is the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity: "Through Christ we

have access by one Spirit unto the Father." This was ever the faith of good men. It is not a mere point of speculation. It is practical. Whoever thinks that he can come to God absolutely without the mediation of Christ, and without the influence of the Holy Spirit, may safely be pronounced ignorant of the true God, and of his own depravity. When men come to know themselves, they find that they are unclean; and, that a just and holy God condemns them: Nor can they rest till they become acquainted with him through Christ. And they find they cannot know him through Christ, but by the influence of this same Holy Spirit. It was thus that Jacob knew him, when he called him "the Angel which redeemed me from all evil." It was a very different thing from that general knowledge of God, which is attainable by the light of nature. Such a knowledge as this would not have supported Jacob in the prospect of death. When he cries, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord," he looked for heavenly enjoyments through the Mediator. He knew himself to be full of evil, and unfit to approach God. But the God whom he served was the "Angel who redeemed his soul from all evil." And this view of things is not, in any degree, natural to man in his unconverted state. In Jacob's case, and in that of all men who really love God, it is effected by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

To finish then this observation. Let us see that our meditations and preparations for death be attended with right views of God in Christ, as saving us unworthy and miserable sinners, of his goodness alone. In this light we shall be both humble and

thankful; and our warm recommendation of the God, whom we have proved, to our friends and offspring, will be rational and impressive.—

" Bless the lads," says the pious and affectionate Patriarch. On this last clause I would just observe, that all parents when they come to die, naturally wish that the blessing of God may attend their children. " God bless you," all can say to their children, without meaning much more than to express their hearty concern for their welfare. But consider; Do you know who the God is whom you desire to bless your children? Do you see in Jesus the foundation for trusting in him? Have you loved, served, and pleased him; and have you set your children an example of serving and obeying him? If you have, you may recommend him to them with some authority; but how cold and unmeaning are your prayers for them, if you have not; if, by your life, you have rather led them to neglect and despise him!

To conclude. If you would experience that peace and hope in your death, which Jacob felt, you must make HIS God, in Christ, your portion and guide through life. You may then lie down in your graves, in sure and certain hope of a resurrection to ETERNAL life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

SERMON VIII.

THE DUTY AND USES OF RELIGIOUS FASTING.

Joel ii. 12.

Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.

THE duty of fasting, attended with humiliation of soul on account of sin, and with hearty conversion to God, as the choice and portion of our souls; is here recommended to his people by the Lord God of Israel. "Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with weeping, and with mourning." Such are the circumstances, which accompany religious fasting, when it is acceptable to the Lord. Bare fasting, as such, has nothing in it well-pleasing to God or profitable to the soul. It is not godliness, but bodily exercise. Now, "bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable to all things." However, fasting profits something, when it is not pharisaically relied on as godliness itself, but is used as an outward mean of godliness, commanded by God himself, as we see in the Text; and it is helpful, under his Spirit, to promote godly sorrow and sincere turning to the Lord. If men do not use it with a view to these ends, they might as well do nothing: They act as insignificantly as those who eat fish instead of flesh during the season of

Lent, and call that fasting. Much therefore is spoken in Scripture against ostentatious, and hypocritical, and self-righteous fasting, as also something against tormenting the body by excessive abstinence, because the Jews were addicted to this practice, at the same time that they lived in abominable iniquity. The Holy Ghost also foresaw the abuses of Antichrist,—that is of Popery,—on this head.

But then there is an extreme on the other side. To prove that fasting is commanded of God, no more needs be said than barely to repeat the Text; for the Lord does not appear to be speaking here of temperance and self-denial, and fasting from sin, as some express it; THAT is a christian's duty at all times; but he is here to be understood as enjoining the particular duty of fasting, as an occasional and extraordinary thing. This meaning must, I think, be sufficiently manifest to every one who will read the chapter before us without prejudice. And if we attend to matter of fact, it may truly be observed, that self-indulgence, and the neglect of fasting and of the other severer duties of the same kind, are evils, which, in the practice of many who profess to be religious, need to be rebuked.—While we have shunned one extreme, we have run into another.

After all, fasting profiteth but little in comparison of other means of grace, such as searching the word, hearing it, praying, and meditation; but it cannot be proper to neglect it entirely, since it is commanded, though not statedly, yet occasionally, to be observed. The present holy season of Lent, and particularly the approaching day of our Lord's

crucifixion, a day worthy indeed to be peculiarly observed with fasting, while we look to Christ crucified;—these things, together with the conviction of the danger of hardening our hearts, by living in the breach of the least of the Lord's commands, have induced me to attempt to show you,

1st, The Scripture evidence of the practice of this duty by Saints of old;

2d, The uses and proper ends of fasting.

1. Be it so that this is one of the least commandments, nevertheless, if it is a commandment, a threat attends the neglect of it, Matt. v. 19. The same sermon on the mount, in which our Lord utters this threat, contains directions which relate to fasting. Pray, my Brethren, even ye who know the Lord, that Christ Jesus may be exalted in our souls by the work we have before us, and then it shall not be in vain. For if we are not led to know, to trust in, and to love Christ better, by every means of grace, nothing effectual is done to profit us. But I hope to show our present subject to be a Gospel-one, and fruitful to the glory of Christ, and the comfort of our souls, through your prayer and the supply of the spirit of our Lord and Saviour.—

Let us trace religious fasting in some measure through the Bible. It is an exercise that has been ever much in use, in times of mourning and affliction. Though there is no example of fasting to be seen before Moses, yet it is probable that the patriarchs fasted, since we see that there were very great mournings among them. Moses enjoins no particular fast in his five books, excepting THAT on the solemn day of expiation, which was strictly

observed. Levit. xxiii. 27.' "On the tenth day of this seventh month ye shall afflict your souls," inwardly by humility and self-abhorrence, and outwardly by abstinence from all carnal comforts. Though I am far from thinking that the consciences of Christians are bound by Jewish rites, yet surely in the way of expediency, fasting may be strongly recommended, as a mean of helping us in humiliation and solemn contrition, on the day in which we commemorate the real expiation, our suffering Lord bleeding for our sins. Joshua and the elders, we find, remained prostrate before the ark from morning till evening, after the Israelites were defeated by the men of Ai, on occasion of Achan's sin*. And, surely, we have public evils sufficient to induce us, if we had the humble spirit of that godly generation, to imitate their example. We have several subsequent accounts of the Israelites fasting in times of national distress, which show that affliction of soul for sin should be one grand end, in view, to be promoted by fasting, whether public or private. Of David's fasting we have an account both in his history, on occasion of the sickness of the child he had by the wife of Uriah; and also in the Psalms, "I humbled my soul with fasting." As to the forty days fasts of Moses, of Elijah, and of our Lord, no doubt they were miraculous, and out of the common rules of nature: But they surely recommend the THING to us very strongly, to be practised in our measure. Our Lord's fasting, before he was tempted by the devil, demonstrates the utility of this practice when accompanied by

* Joshua vii.

true Christian faith and love: and also the strength which it imparts to resist temptations, particularly such as he underwent, temptations to worldly and carnal lusts. And the forty days fastings of Moses and Elijah deserve to be considered, when you reflect that these were they, who appeared with our Lord in glory at his transfiguration, and spoke of his decease, that is, his suffering which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. I believe the thought is not amiss, that they, who most resemble Christ in mortification and self-denial, shall be most favoured with spiritual views and refreshments here, drawn by faith from Christ crucified. The fasting of the Ninevites on Jonah's preaching had something in it acceptable to the Lord, as may appear to any who attend to the story.

Our Lord did not institute any particular fasts, but he evidently, in his Sermon on the mount, recommends fasting as an occasional duty of real believers, and as an evidence of their humbling their souls for their sins. While he directs that it be practised sincerely, and guards against ostentatious abuses, he evidently inculcates the thing itself. "Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly*." We find also, that when the Pharisees reproached our Lord, because their disciples, and likewise those of John, fasted often; but HIS disciples ate and drank like other people, they were given to understand, that, though the proper season

* Matthew vi. 16.

for their fasting was not while He, the bridegroom, was present with them, yet the days would come, when he should be taken from them; and then they should fast: after our Lord's ascension, they should have troubles and dangers, which would make fasting seasonable. Besides, this is a duty not so proper for young converts, as for those more advanced in grace. Our Lord, with beautiful tenderness, and agreeably to his character of a shepherd*, who gently leads those of his flock that are with young, illustrates the case, by comparing it to that of "putting new wine into old bottles, or a piece of new garment upon an old." He then adds, "that no man having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new†." Christ's disciples are not hastily to be driven into rigorous duties. They must learn to practise them gradually; otherwise, the unsuitableness of the things themselves to their state will be like that of new cloth to an old garment; and they will get only legal bondage and misery by them.

No good reason can be assigned why these rules of fasting should not belong to Christ's disciples in all ages as well as to those in the days of the Apostles. But let them be modified by that discreet tenderness and compassion, which our Lord himself expresses. Disciples of proud Pharisees may fast with ease and with pleasure; their pride is feasted thereby: but to fast with humility, with tenderness of conscience, without extremes; and, above all, to find the end answered in being led more to Christ by it,—all this exceeds,

* Isaiah xl. 11. † Luke v. 36—39.

generally, the wisdom of beginners in religion. To neglect it altogether, as some professors of christianity do, cannot be right: to practise it improperly may be hurtful; but if we are looking to the Lord, he will lead us safely and profitably; his own words on the subject will direct us. His sincere people feel snares and weaknesses, which are apt to entangle them continually;—and may God keep me from hurting any soul, in the least, by excessive strictness, or by injudicious advice, unsuitable to their condition!

We find also that Jehosaphat, in time of great danger, proclaimed a fast. Ezra also, and the people fasted and besought their God; and he was intreated of them. Nehemiah too, in affliction for his country, fasted privately, and the Lord blessed his labours. Fasting was practised also by Daniel, who set himself to seek instruction by prayer and fasting; and it deserves to be remembered, that, in consequence of this religious exercise, he was favoured with one of the richest views of Christ to be found in the Old Testament. It is in the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel. Why need I mention the fastings spoken of in the Acts of the Apostles? The lives of the first believers were full of self-denial;—"In fastings often," says St. Paul. He recommends also the occasional use of it to married persons, who know the Lord, 1 Cor. vii. 5. Anna, the old prophetess, served God with fastings and prayers night and day, Luke ii. and we know the happy event which followed: She was favoured with a glorious view of Christ. Cornelius also, the first fruits of the Gentiles, teaches us Gentiles the

use of fasting, as one among the many means of grace and spiritual improvement *, which God has been pleased to bestow upon us. You know he was brought to rejoice in Christ, and had the comforts of the Holy Ghost. One reason why we have so little joy in God, and they had so much, is, that they did not seek to gratify the flesh, as we do.

But enough has been said to show, how much fasting was practised by God's people of old. Those, who deride it, can hardly, with decency, call themselves Christians: and those who would be always and altogether excused from the observance of it, should consider that our Lord said, "this kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting." There are particular evils, strong lusts and stubborn habits, which it may be necessary to resist by fasting. It must shew arrogance in any one to set aside, without ceremony, a mean which we see has always been used by the Church of God in its best state. But I suspect such men will find by examining themselves, that self-indulgence and unwillingness to bear Christ's cross, lies at the bottom of their total disregard of fasting.

2. It is now time that I should proceed to set forth the ends and uses of this duty. Let none set about it in his own strength, or rest in the thing itself, to pacify conscience. He will find, if he does, as too many in former ages have found, that he will be led farther from Christ, rather than be brought nearer to him, by fasting. Let him be more careful about the ends and the uses than the thing itself. By evangelizing the duty you will grow more holy; you will be more comfortable; and, you will find

* Acts x.

Christ more precious: On the contrary, by using a little abstinence, MERELY as a duty, without knowing or seeking any distinct useful purposes to be answered thereby, you will only feed self-righteousness, and gain nothing at all in real holiness.

The Evangelical uses of fasting are, I apprehend, directly or indirectly set forth in the very excellent Collect of our church. It is a prayer addressed to our Lord himself: and, by the suppliant who unites, in his idea, the power of the Godhead with the sympathy and compassion of the man, it will be found an encouraging address indeed to the Son of God. "O Lord, who for our sakes didst fast forty days and forty nights; give us grace to use such abstinence, that our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness, to thy honour and glory, who livest and reignest with the Father and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end."

The various uses of fasting, as a suitable mean of humbling the soul, of weaning it from the world, of subduing the flesh to the Spirit, and of bringing us into nearer and sweeter communion with Christ, are all expressed in this Collect. For thus sanctifying our abstinence, we must wholly rely on the grace and strength of Christ. Fasting was practised by himself in the days of his flesh: the benefit is to be received from him, by faith alone: and, in this admirable prayer, it is asked of him. When the soul is humbled by fasting it will be disposed to express itself in the following manner. "O Lord Jesus, alas! that I should have a nature so wicked, blind, sensual and corrupt as to prefer any worldly or animal gratification before Thee! I have chosen

many vile earthly gratifications, and have had more relish for them than for thee! Alas! O Lord, that thy pity, love, power, wisdom, goodness; thy wonderful works, and most bitter sufferings for me, should be, as it were, lost upon me! They were meant to make me free and wise, holy and happy: to make me one spirit with thee; and to lead me to true joys and pleasures,—but my corrupt nature, the flesh, craves and hankers only after worldly and carnal indulgences;—by yielding to which I am become more and more stupified and dull with respect to true happiness! Give me, dear Lord, the grace of abstinence, that not only through fasting occasionally, but also, through a careful watchfulness against excess in the use of all innocent things, lest they steal away my heart, I may be cured of my wicked propensity to fulfil the lusts of the flesh; and may seek more simply for true, holy, gratifications."—Thus the Psalmist humbled his soul with fasting: And thus he was led to feel sin in a more solemn and distinct manner; and hence the Saviour became more precious in his eyes.

Let fasting be used as a mean to wean us from the world. Surely, by checking occasionally the natural appetite for food, the Christian may learn to value the bread of life more distinctly, and be led more feelingly to live above this world's enjoyments. Thus, by abridging himself in the use of them now and then, he may habituate himself to the reflection, that a time will come shortly, when he shall have done with them altogether: and that to have an appetite for the meat which endureth to everlasting life, is that which most concerns him; and that even

these worldly enjoyments are not his by right. For, let it ever be remembered, that these, as well as all good things, in the way of justice, are forfeited by sin; and if you feel even some pain by abstinence, you may be taught to advert, with more sympathy, to the wants of others, and be stirred up with more liberality to relieve those creatures of God, who are entirely as deserving as yourself, but who, in the course of His providence, want the common necessaries of life.

Let fasting be used, as one mean of subduing the flesh to the Spirit. I say as ONE mean: for, it is neither the only one nor the principal. But it is commanded, and therefore it should be used in the faith of Jesus. "Pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness," these three often go together. The Lord declares, by Ezekiel, they did so in Sodom, which was destroyed by fire and brimstone. If fulness of bread then be apt to feed the flesh, that is, the corrupt nature, occasional abstinence, and a constant course of temperance, may evidently tend to subdue the deeds of the body.

Hence, lastly, the soul becomes more fit for near and sweet communion with Christ by faith. We have seen how Daniel set himself to seek God by fasting; and if we practise this duty with the same spirit, there can be no doubt, but, through the divine blessing, the same effect will be produced. Hence the soul may learn with greater self-command,—though not perhaps at first, but gradually this may be attained,—to wait upon God, to bear his will, to tarry his leisure, and to look for true pleasure in Christ only. And, by becoming meek and gentle,

humble and teachable, the spiritual senses are better exercised to hear what the Lord saith; and hence to obey the godly motions of his Spirit in righteousness and true holiness, to his honour and glory. The soul, which, despising, or being comparatively indifferent about the bread that perisheth, hungers and thirsts after righteousness, in hopes of being filled, shall find the Lord Jesus to be "meat indeed and drink indeed."

Nor is it only with regard to meat and drink, that occasional abstinence and constant temperance should be recommended to Christians. Let us look, each at himself and his constant practice, and let us consider what worldly enjoyments are apt to run away with our hearts; what are the false gods that, for pleasure and comfort, would rival in our esteem the God of Israel? What Isaacs are to be given up, what worldly thing, though in itself lawful, we follow with too much eagerness and ardour? It is certain that, with abundance of real believers, spiritual comforts are at a very low ebb; and this happens, because they are not content with the Holy Ghost for their comforter, though in the TE DEUM we express our faith in him as the "COMFORTER."

Let Christians consider what has been said, and go to Christ for faith and strength to put it in practice; and they will find the fruit of it in an increase of holiness here and of happiness hereafter. And ye, who are so far from fasting on any godly account, that to enjoy worldly pleasure is all your aim and study, will ye learn that the word of God sets a black mark on those who are "lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God." Do not think that

a short abstinence from diversions during some part of the season of Lent, while your heart loves them as much as ever, and while it is ready to return to the same excess of riot again, will be, in any measure, acceptable to God. You want new hearts; a new taste for pleasure: You do not know what true pleasure is. It consists in communion with God: but if you would obtain it, you must come to God by Christ: and before you can discharge any one duty acceptable to God, you must learn distinctly to practise the great duty of believing on the Son of God. Of this knowledge and of this practice you are absolutely in need, in the first place. Without these you are under the curse. Let the question go round this congregation. Did you ever in the view of your lost state, and of Jesus, as an able and willing Saviour, come to God by him, and stay your souls upon his sacrifice and intercession? In that case you know in whom you have believed; and you may look up with comfort to his Father and your Father, to his God and your God. You will earnestly desire that all carnal affections may die in you, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in you; and for this end you will use the means of which we have been speaking. But, if you know nothing of conversion to God, or of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are in a perishing state, and the wrath of God abideth on you. "Turn ye then unto the Lord with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning, that you may obtain mercy, and stand in the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

SERMON IX.

THE COMMUNION OFFICE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND CONSIDERED.

1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread.

It is hardly necessary to inform you, that the subject of the Apostle is here, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. I have several times explained it to you, in this place; but, such is its importance and usefulness to the real children of God, that, with his help, I will endeavour to set it before you, once more, in a fresh discourse.

In doing this, the communion-service of the Church of England shall be my guide. I have, some time ago, made reflections on this beautiful service, with a view to convince the ungodly of the hypocrisy of their attendance at the altar. I shall now suppose the Communicant to have renounced his own righteousness, to have come to Christ as his all, with a desire to glorify and enjoy him in this his appointed ordinance. None but such are welcome attendants

at the altar: none but such can have real communion with Christ: none but such receive benefit from this service. "The wicked, indeed, and such as be void of a lively faith*, although they do carnally and visibly press with their teeth, as Saint Austin saith, the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ; yet in no wise are they partakers of Christ: but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or sacrament of so great a thing."

But this does by no means hinder the blessed effect of this heavenly ordinance on the souls of those who receive it in faith and love; it would be strange if it did. The matter is well set forth in the xxvi Article of Religion, which is entitled, "Of the unworthiness of the Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the Sacraments," the whole of which deserves to be carefully perused. It declares that "the effect of Christ's ordinance is not taken away by their wickedness, nor the grace of God's gift diminished from such, as by faith, do rightly receive the sacraments ministered to them, which be effectual because of Christ's institution and promise." Let none then be discouraged from attending the Lord's Table on account of the ungodliness of others. It is a vain thing to expect that, in this world, the Church should be cleansed from all tares: both wheat and tares must grow till the time of harvest. A perfect communion of spotless worshippers we must patiently wait for, till we arrive at heaven.

We owe that respect to our excellent Church that we ought to attend her services, as many as "worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus,"

* Vide xxix Article.

even though the evil should happen to have chief authority * in the ministration of the word and sacraments; and though there should be too much reason to suppose, without any breach of Christian charity, that many who profess themselves members of the visible church, and with us partake of the outward part or sign of the Lord's Supper, are dead in trespasses and sins. Oh! my Brethren, let us do all the good we can to them, by practically convincing them that we are the true Churchmen; and that those are the false ones, who either profanely neglect the Lord's Supper entirely, or who, by their lives, make it plain, that they receive that holy sacrament unworthily. Let us not harden them against the truth by giving them occasion to suppose that we are ill affected to the national Establishment. Let us adhere to it, and act consistently with our profession, that we may be the means of spreading the savour of godliness among others. To promote this generous design, let us bear, without murmuring, various crosses, which, indeed, are but light things compared with the worth of souls. Surely, this would be to follow the example of St. Paul, "I will eat no flesh," says he, "while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." If indeed the Church itself were essentially corrupt, we ought to separate ourselves from it, as our Fathers separated themselves from Popery. But, since the Church of England is as pure, perhaps more pure, than any other Protestant Church this day in the world, we, who see its excellency, and have had a discovery of the fair beauty of the Lord

* See the same Article xxvi.

in his temple, ought, I think, to frequent its services; and not only to do nothing that may give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully; but also, as much as possible, to cut off occasion from them that seek occasion, of cavil or quarrel against our publick Liturgy *.

The Apostle in the Text is speaking of "the cup of blessing," the consecrated wine, and "the bread which we break," the consecrated bread in this Sacrament. He is shewing that in them, by faith, the believer has actual communion with Christ. "Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ; Is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" He has, spiritually, as real an intercourse of friendship with his Saviour in heaven, when he thus worthily commemorates his death, as a man has, temporally, with a friend on earth; and his soul is nourished and strengthened with a view to carry it on the way to heaven, as actually, as the body is nourished by temporal food. "For we, being many, are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." Christ's real members are all united in one body, all partaking of that one Bread of life, Christ Jesus.

I know nothing that will more simply and truly illustrate these comfortable ideas of the union subsisting between Christ and his Church, and also between the real members of it, among one another, than the Communion Service of the church. I despair, on this side heaven, ever to find this ordinance more spiritually conducted. Let me beseech you, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, to study it. With this view let us proceed, as I pro-

* See the Preface to the book of Common Prayer.

posed, to make some reflections on the several parts of it.

At the time of the celebration of the Communion, the Priest begins with an exhortation; in which he informs us how St. Paul exhorteth all persons to try themselves, before they presume to eat of that bread and drink of that cup. Where men partake of it aright, there they "spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink his blood; there they dwell in Christ and Christ in them; they are one with Christ and Christ with them;" exactly according to the ideas of communion set forth in the Text. That this blessed end may be answered to us, and that we may avoid the great peril which attends the unworthy receiving thereof, we are exhorted to condemn ourselves, to repent sincerely, and believe the Gospel, and bring forth the fruits of it in love. A spirit of thankfulness to God our Saviour is particularly recommended; and, to this end, we are reminded what we ourselves are,—"miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death." It is an easy thing for a person, in words, and in repeating a general confession, to own this; but for a man to own himself a miserable sinner from the heart, is a matter of much more difficulty: What pains do people take to prevent themselves from being convinced of this their real state! Yet, without such a conviction, how can men bring to God any real thankfulness for their redemption by Jesus Christ? Surely, if I feel not myself a miserable sinner, I shall never either heartily prize Christ or heartily thank him. The language of praise will come from me as dead and unmeaning as the language of humiliation.

Ye then that mind to come to the holy communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ, consider how you are disposed in this respect. And let all, who know Christ indeed, dwell much upon these self-humbling views.

Another thing, with the remembrance and the consideration of which we are called upon to be heartily affected, is "the death and passion of our Saviour Christ both God and man, who did humble himself even to the death upon the Cross for us." And this is, most certainly, the life and soul of the whole Communion.—Let us, then, ask ourselves, before we come to the Table, what views we have of HIM. If indeed we do thus regard Christ, thus esteem him as our God and Saviour, who laid down his life for us, we must both trust in and love him above all things.

The next thing to which this exhortation calls our attention, is the end of his sufferings. It was an end worthy of God, "that he might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life." Thou then, who art verily and indeed looking to Jesus in this ordinance, shouldst be considering the immense value of thy privileges. Thou art already a child of God. His Father is thy Father; He has mansions prepared for thee: His worthiness is thy Title to everlasting life. Thou art now a poor sinner; a miserable creature in many respects; and exposed, in this earthly state, to many calamities; but, he allows and commands thee to expect the best things, even heaven itself, from him. He orders thee to eat and drink these pledges of his dying love, as a testimony of thy faith in him as

thy only friend, and of thy joyful expectation of being presented, one day, by him to his Father, complete in body and soul. "Thus, as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord's death till he come." And these pledges were instituted, says the exhortation, "for a continual remembrance of his death, to our great and endless comfort."

Be it then remembered, that the true comfort of the soul is Christ crucified for our sins, Christ expected to appear again to complete our rest and felicity. This is endless comfort indeed: and because we are slow to believe, and apt to forget the loving-kindness of the Lord, therefore would our Lord have us, frequently, to remember him in this ordinance, since we cannot fail at the same time to remember our own comforts. Then, in the faith of this full and everlasting Salvation, the Exhortation concludes with directing us to give thanks, to submit to the will of God in all things, and study to serve him in true holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

The Communion-service then leads us to confession of sin. The Church is well aware that whom God exalts he will see humbled first. We fall on our knees, and join in the most self-abasing confession of guilt, for the lowliest posture of the body and the deepest humiliation of the heart becomes us. Let the communicant in this act set the majesty of the HIGH and HOLY ONE before his eyes; let him think of his own personal guilt in any light which may most affect him; let him charge his memory with those views of his own iniquity,

which he knows by experience most affect him, and which show to him, with peculiar emphasis, the need he has of Christ's blood. Here he may expect the fulfilment of the promise in Zec. xii. "I will pour the spirit of grace and supplication; and they shall look on me whom they have pierced." The true skill of Christianity lies in mingling together the lowest self-abasement and the most confident dependence on Christ. You may conceive yourself like the high priest, in the expiation day * confessing over the goat, and laying upon him, to carry into the wilderness, all the iniquities of the people. Jesus is both the real high Priest and the real scape goat; and you should, by faith, view him pleading for you above. While with the deepest contrition you confess that the burden of your sins is intolerable, keep your eye on him; and by faith transfer your guilt over to him. By thus confessing your sins; transferring the guilt of them to Christ; bewailing your own utter unworthiness; glorying in his worthiness; and expecting and soliciting from him not only peace of conscience but strength for newness of life, you will be prepared for the comforts of the Gospel; and your service will not be a mockery of God; but a real and substantial performance of a bounden duty.

The Absolution is then pronounced by the Priest, containing the promise of pardon and peace to miserable sinners thus coming indeed to God in the faith and repentance of the Gospel, which we have described. While you hear this absolution read, and set your seal to it by an Amen, forget not to

* Lev. xvi.

apply it to yourself. Assuredly, this forgiveness was meant for you as well as for any other penitent who trusts in Christ's sacrifice; and, therefore, you should here charge your soul to apply to itself the comfort of the Lord. But feeble is the voice of man, either that of the minister or your own, to speak peace. The Church knew that God only could do this to good purpose. "I," says He, "create the fruit of the lips, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is nigh, and I will heal him." Therefore the Minister's declaration of God's pardoning love is supported by four well-chosen passages of Scripture, of which I shall say nothing at present, but this: They tell the weary, burdened, troubled conscience, "Here is peace for thee: Christ takes away all thy sins, and will give thee everlasting life: Receive these inestimable blessings, and enjoy them."—This is their language. I hear in them the genuine voice of the Gospel. The Minister, in substance and effect, says, "I have been pronouncing God's pardon and peace to the penitent believing soul: but, Brethren, take it not on my word: I have a commission from God to declare this. Hear our Saviour Christ; hear St. Paul; hear St. John speak thus comfortably to you.

Let us now see how far we have advanced. In this service, one of the most solemn transactions between God and the conscience, that can take place on earth, is here set forth; and according to the true idea of communion between the Saviour and the Church as stated in the Text. If good men considered it aright, and more deeply, they would not so much debar themselves, as I fear they

still do, of the strength and comfort obtained in this ordinance.

In the exhortation, we begin with the Church in setting forth the business in general about which we are assembled. Then we humble ourselves as criminals self-condemned; transferring our guilt over to our sacrifice and surety, the Lord Jesus. We then hear the declaration of mercy and forgiveness to our souls from the Minister, backed with the declarations of God's word to confirm it. If then we have been in earnest; if we have rightly understood and rightly joined in all this, we are justified by faith, we rejoice in God, we have peace of conscience, according to the evangelical views before us. High is our state indeed: We are children of God and heirs of everlasting life.

And now the Priest exhorts us to "lift up our hearts:" well should we answer, "we lift them up unto the Lord," our God in heaven, whose children we now are by faith. "Let us give thanks to our Lord God," well should we answer, "it is meet and right so to do." For if God thus commend his love to us sinners; if he thus forgive us his enemies, and make us his children beloved, in his own Son, and allow us to expect one day to be like him, when we shall see him as he is, words are too poor to express his praise. But God accepts the sacrifice of a grateful heart; and the sublime language of the Church, in the thanksgivings which follow, well expresses this.

Methinks the several parts of the service describe and assist, very naturally, the godly emotions of the believing soul. Humility and praise sweetly temper

one another. Mourning for sin, and joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, were never, by human pen, better described in agreeable concert, than in this most beautiful service. The soul, in the transport of joy and gratitude, should be elevated exceedingly, and be filled with great conceptions, above what, ordinarily belong to its militant and imperfect state. The Priest kneels, and in the name of all the Communicants calls on his own soul and on theirs to remember,—according to Daniel's prayer in chapter ix.—that they do not presume to come to this table trusting in their own righteousness, but in God's manifold and great mercies*. We are to repent, to believe, to praise, to love our Saviour, and one another: All these affections are much cherished and assisted by the devotions of this service; but when we speak of our title to eternal life, they are all to be cast behind our back as nothing worth. Christ's worthiness is the whole; and this is the turning point in Christianity, on which an acceptable and comfortable communion with our Saviour in this ordinance depends. In this faith then we pray for the enjoyment of a vital and everlasting union with him, by eating his flesh and drinking his blood; and we attend the prayer of Consecration,—of which nothing particular needs be said, as it is formed entirely on the Sacred History of the institution of this ordinance.

* If the nature of the Communion were well understood by believers, they would make it more important and more useful to them than they generally do. Nothing can be more interesting than the

* Dan. ix. 18.

part of this service, to which we are now advancing. We have seen the cup of blessing, spoken of in the Text, consecrated, and the bread broken. We are to look on them as SIGNS of the body and blood of Christ, broken and shed upon the Cross for our sins. We have prayed, with the Priest, that in eating the bread and drinking the wine, we may so eat and drink of Jesus, that our bodies and souls may be washed and cleansed by his body and blood. A solemn renewal of this washing and cleansing we should seek for, every time we communicate;—for we need it often indeed;—such repeated defilements are we receiving from the flesh and the world.

Now if all this be a vain ceremony not authorized by the word of God, then indeed we might as well cut our flesh with lancets; and from morning till noon cry with Baal's priests, "O Baal, hear us." But it is not so: The one oblation of Jesus once offered is a full, perfect, and sufficient satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. We receive the pledges of it in bread and wine, appealing in the presence of God to the original design of the institution. We pray also, that the intent of the institution may be answered to our souls, in HIS name, who bids us ask and receive, that our joy may be full. When, therefore, the Minister delivers to us the consecrated elements, praying that the body and blood of Christ may preserve us to life, everlasting life, and bids us feed on him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving; then let us remember that Jesus has said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." Let us at that solemn

moment commit our whole selves, soul and body, to him, surrendering ourselves into his hands, nor doubt of his promise to preserve us till that glorious day, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, and we shall appear with him in glory. Whatever load of guilt and care we have upon us, let us cheerfully and solemnly cast it all upon him, our gracious friend, the bearer of all our burdens. The issue of this transaction should be, according to the order of things in the office: Peace and liberty of spirit, with joy in God.

I am far from denying the acceptableness of the real communicant before God, though he may not come up to these ideas, in the order of things, and with the fervour of soul which I have described. Nevertheless, this is the spirit of the institution: And this is to be aimed at. Remember the words of the Text: "the Communion of the body and blood of Christ;" and reflect seriously on "the thing signified" by these words *. A friendly intercourse with Christ, as of one friend with another, and the endearing pledges of mutual love, are what the ordinance is intended to promote; and every part of the service is naturally adapted to assist and cherish these ideas.

In the prayer, after all have communicated, we beseech God, that what we have been about may not be to us an uninteresting transaction; that we may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of our Lord's Passion; and that our unworthiness

* See the Catechism of the Church of England.
Quest. What is the inward part or thing signified?
Answ. . . . .

may not hinder these blessed effects.—Here we should summon our souls to look unto God with confident expectation, that, if we came with a load of guilt and bondage on our consciences, we may not go away burdened and enslaved, but pardoned, comfortable, and free. The very nature of the institution, pointing out Christ crucified as our peace and our comfort, encourages us to expect this. But mankind are ever prone to extremes, on the one hand or on the other. Because many have, through the mercy of God, been cured of the self-righteous dependance they used to place on the Sacrament, they are apt to have too slight thoughts of its utility; and to be indifferent, whether they frequent it or not. Well-disposed persons, who often gain both spiritual comfort and strength through the means of Sermons, gain nothing from the Sacrament. Why is this? You are in too lazy a posture of soul; you do not reverently esteem, as you should, this precious mean of grace, as the channel in which the comforts of your salvation may be expected richly to flow. The Reformers,—and so far am I from thinking that we are more spiritually wise than they, that I would gladly learn from them all that I could; —the Reformers, I say, speak differently of the importance of this institution. They express themselves to this effect, in the second prayer * :—" Almighty and everliving God, we most heartily thank thee, for that thou dost vouchsafe to feed us, who have duly received these holy Mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ; and dost

* See the Order for the holy Communion.

assure us thereby of thy favour and goodness towards us; and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of thy Son." So that the blessing of assurance was in their idea connected with the right reception of this ordinance. Those, who seek the Lord heartily, in this sacrament, need not be discouraged, though they find not this comfortable effect. Let them follow on to know the Lord in it, and they have abundant reason to expect the most joyful fruit.

Here also, in consequence of our faith in God's free love to us, we in return,—and Oh! how should we wrestle with God, that we may not leave his table with any thing so much at heart as the honour of our God,—"offer and present unto the Lord ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God." The warmth and cordiality of this will much depend on the clearness of our views, and the firmness of our faith in Christ, for it is his love that must constrain us. Thus the Communion is complete. An intercourse is opened between the Lord and his people. "I am your God," "we are thy people." This is communion indeed; and, "Glory be to God on high," . . . . . which follows, is a wonderfully sublime thanksgiving suited to the glorious occasion.

How may we then lament, that numbers, who frequent this ordinance, are utterly dead to every spiritual sensation, go through the whole as a formality, and depart as cold and worldly as ever. Oh! repent of your sins, else come not to that Holy Table!

I shall be glad if what I have said may, by God's blessing, stir up those of us, who really know the ways of God, to frequent the Lord's Supper, and to expect great things from their Saviour in it. Need I add also, that by frequenting it in this house you are to testify that you are true Churchmen. Indeed we may well detest bigotry: we may well say, grace be with all them of every denomination that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity: we may well say, that the Church is not to be prized for her walls, but for her doctrines and her spirit. Yet we should act consistently: We ought to shew our esteem for the national Establishment to which we belong. I, for my part, think it so sound and excellent, that I see not a shadow of reason why any should separate. I have always professed not to set up any new religion, but under God to exhort men to receive the old; namely, that which is already established in the Church, protesting, at the same time, against that sad departure from its spirit and its doctrines which has in general prevailed. I know not how we are to avoid those separations and divisions, which are every where condemned in Scripture, but by adhering to the Church, in which the grace of God has visited us.—Let us then labour to profit by the excellent means we enjoy, and to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

SERMON X.

THE CHARACTER AND PRAYER OF SAMSON.

Judges xv. 18.

And he was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?

BEFORE I enter upon the practical uses of the Text, and the story, with which it is connected, it will be proper to make some remarks on the character and history of the Person who is the subject of both. This is Samson, whose short history is full of wonderful events.

Israel had sinned against the Lord, as was usual in the days of the Judges, and they were delivered into the hand of the Philistines forty years. But the Lord, who chastened his people, gave them not over to destruction. He raised up Judges, from time to time, who delivered them, and among these was Samson; of whom, before his birth, it was declared, that he should begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines. God had endowed him with a strength of body prodigiously above the common lot of humanity, and led him by his Holy Spirit to great actions for the deliverance of his

country. But the people, besotted with idolatry, and sunk in ignorance and unbelief, had no heart to follow the standard of Samson, whose single prowess was of great service to check the domineering Philistines; but it was not to be expected that one man alone could do that which the whole nation ought to have joined in accomplishing.

In judging of this extraordinary character we ought to keep our eye on those times, and on that particular dispensation. He performed many wonderful exploits; and he shed much blood; but he had an express commission from the Lord of heaven and earth. His very birth was miraculous; and he knew, that the end of his existence, in this life, was to be a scourge to the Philistines, to uphold the honour of the God of Israel, and to disgrace Dagon the Philistine idol; and also, by acts of valour, which proceeded from faith in his God, and were done in obedience to his command, to glorify the Lord, and give lectures of instruction to an unbelieving and idolatrous people. These were as much the duties of Samson, as it was St. Paul's duty to preach the Gospel of Christ to the Gentiles: Let us not hear then of his cruelties or barbarities. The revenge which he breathed, even if we allow some mixtures of human evil in it, was doubtless a holy revenge in the cause of the Lord; and it was a great sign of the very low state of godliness in the land, that not a single soul seems to have been stirred up to follow his example. Far, however, be it from me to undertake to vindicate his immoralities. The same holy Scripture, which evidently commends his acts of valour, as proceeding from

faith and piety, condemns his transgressions by distinctly showing their bitter consequences. Sin has a sting; and for wicked men to encourage themselves in any vicious indulgence, because the servants of the Lord have, at times, fallen into it, is one of the worst symptoms of a corrupt heart. It implies great impenitence and obduracy.

Consider only how this man smarted for his crimes; disgraced, bound, blinded, cruelly insulted by his enemies, and cut off in the midst of his days. Is this an encouragement for men to sin? Does any one now hear me, who, by a course of libidinous and unlawful indulgences, has wasted his fortune, and rendered his character infamous, or whose body is decaying and sinking into the grave from the same causes? Can such a person possibly derive consolation from reflecting, that Samson, in the worst part of his disposition, resembled him? That Samson was lascivious and was betrayed and ruined by a harlot? But it ought to be remembered that christian motives, doctrines, rules, and the example of Christ, are known, or ought to be known, by us, which Samson could not be acquainted with. Though he knew enough to condemn his folly, yet I apprehend there is not a person in this congregation who, in sinning as Samson did, does not provoke the Lord far more, by sinning against that superior light with which we are so highly favoured. To have the opportunity of reading; of hearing the word of God expounded; to have every sort of encouragement and instruction in the path of duty, —these are our privileges, and I tremble to think what a dreadful account many of us will have to

give at the great day, for our neglect of these means of improvement.

But, perhaps you are hardly aware of the disadvantages under which Samson laboured on account of the time in which he lived. It was the darkest portion of that dark dispensation. The land was full of idols: There was no regular course of instruction: It may be doubted, whether he ever heard during his whole life a good exposition of the law of Moses; and even whether he could read at all. It was a season of general ignorance; and heathenish connexions and customs had almost blotted out the knowledge of the true God and his worship. These things ought to be considered by those who feel disposed to encourage themselves in sin because of Samson's transgressions. Whatever he was, he doubtless repented, humbled himself before God, and was saved by faith in the Redeemer; and it will be the wisdom of men to attend to this part of his character for their own benefit. And, as all Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, and instruction in righteousness; and as Samson is, in the New Testament*, expressly enumerated among the Lord's people, who did great and marvellous things by faith, I could not prevail with myself to omit the review of this Saint, to please the over nice taste of persons more delicate than intelligent in the sacred Scriptures. No; let the word of God have its honour; it is that by which Christ is exalted, and sinners saved, amidst the endless cavils of profane or ignorant men.

In the transaction of the Chapter† before us, the

* Heb. xi. 32. † Judg. xvi.

men of Judah, with the base cowardice of unbelief, deliver up Samson bound into the hand of the Philistines. He is bound with two new cords, and the Philistines, seeing him their prisoner, shout against him. But when God's enemies triumph, then is the time for him to appear for the honour of his name. The Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon his champion, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire; and then it was that with a jaw bone of an ass he slew a thousand men. The hero, now seeing the rest dispersed, seems to have given way to the dictates of vain glory; —" with the jaw bone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw bone of an ass have I slain a thousand men." And when he casts it out of his hand, he gives a name to the place, which signifies the casting away of the jaw bone. This seems a farther proof, that pride now swelled his heart.

It was common for holy men to give names to places, in thankful remembrance of the Lord's deliverances. In the history of Jacob this was remarkably the case. But in this passage there is not a word concerning the Lord: Samson seems to be thinking only of himself. God, who is jealous of his own glory, knows how to make his servants feel their dependance upon him. It follows in the Text, " He was sore athirst, and called on the Lord, and said, Thou hast given this great deliverance into the hand of thy servant: and now shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hand of the uncircumcised?" Finding himself quite spent and overpowered; and sensible that if the remainder of his enemies should return upon him, he must fall into their hands, he

gratefully acknowledges the Lord's goodness to his servant; and prays, that he would complete it on that occasion by not suffering him to fall into their hands.

It is a great argument, in prayer, for a believer to remind the Lord of what he has done for him already; and to entreat him not to let all this kindness be lost, by permitting him at last to fall into the hands of wicked men and devils, lest the name of the Lord should be dishonoured. "Then the Egyptians will hear of it," says Moses; "and what wilt thou do to thy great name?" On more occasions than one Moses prays in this manner. Arguments which affect the honour of God are weighty with him. All true Saints know how to use them in their supplication. Samson,—an ignorant man compared with Moses,—knows how to avail himself of them. The very spirit of divine faith is concerned in these argumentative petitions: the Lord hears and answers. "He clave a hollow place that was in the jaw, and there came water thereout; and when he had drunk, his spirit came again, and he revived: wherefore he called the name thereof Enhakkore." Samson now felt that, which of all things we are least disposed to feel, namely,—that his help was in God. He altered therefore the name of the place, and the name he now gave it, means, "the fountain of him that cried in Lehi," to intimate that this thirst was relieved, and that God had given a marvellous supply to him, when he cried in the hour of his distress.

Thus you see the story is of a piece with all Scripture. However different the dispensations,

yet, the one grand end, both of the Jewish and of the Christian, is to glorify God, to humble men, to rebuke their pride and self-sufficiency, to teach them to trust in him alone when all help fails, and to make them exalt his praise. This is the whole design of the Gospel; the very song of heaven; "thou wast slain, and hast washed us from our sins in thy blood." With this key in your hand you may open your Bible, and find instructions every where.

The dying circumstances of Samson teach the same lesson. The Philistines are boasting, "Dagon our God hath delivered our enemy into our hand." In the midst of their triumph the afflicted hero remembers the kindness of his God, in the marvellous circumstances of his birth, and how the Lord had blessed him. It is true, he had forfeited every claim to the divine favour by the indulgence of his sinful passions; and, because of his blindness, he could no more fight the Lord's battles, nor answer the end of his birth. But he could give up his life for the honour of his God. HE, who had strengthened him so wonderfully, could strengthen him again. To check the domineering tyranny of the Philistines, to show the people of Israel that their God had not forsaken them, and was jealous of his own glory, and would confound the idolatrous boastings of the Philistines in their Dagon,—these were thoughts worthy of a Saint recovering his lost ground by the holy exercises of faith and repentance, and such thoughts as none but a real Saint could practically exercise. "Remember me, O God, this once," he cries in the vehemence of his zeal. And, as the writer to the Hebrews observes, I apprehend with

a special reference to Samson, "out of weakness he was made strong," and, in the last act of his life, did more of that especial service, for which the Lord had ordained him, than he had ever done before. It is enough for a true Saint, that he do some real service to his God, though it cost him his life. His LIFE, did I say? What is this life? A living death, a passing vapour. A real Saint LIVES in Eternity.

Though the dispensation under which Samson lived, and the violence of his passions, in the middle part of his life, render him by no means so pleasant an object of Christian contemplation, as the Saints described in the New Testament, enough, I hope, has been said to show that the exercises of faith in the God of Israel are the same in all ages. Therefore his story is not without instruction to us; and let this instruction be now distinctly observed in several particulars.

1. Let the many, who, in our days, without shame or remorse, practise the sin which proved so great a snare to Samson and involved him in disgrace, contempt, and misery, take to themselves wholesome rebuke from his history.—Is there any thing in his case to make a jest of, or to trifle with? Is it not a serious and lamentable evil, that a servant of God, endowed with extraordinary abilities by his Maker for particular purposes, and exerting those abilities, from time to time, with much zeal, should, by this sin, which St. Paul says a man commits against his own body, be disabled from discharging his duty; should be baffled, duped, and blinded, not as to his eyes only, but also as to his judgment and conscience, and give occasion to the enemies of

the Lord to speak reproachfully? What an infatuating sin must that be which befools a man, and renders him less than a child in understanding? Take heed, ye who profess godliness, of all approaches to uncleanness: "Lay apart all filthiness *;" "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth †:" Never allow yourselves to discourse lightly on subjects connected with the sin of fornication. How provoking it is to God you may see in thousands of instances, by the bitter fruits of it in this life to both sexes!

And here I cannot but notice how differently the Scripture represents this matter from what is commonly done in those modern publications, which amuse and corrupt our youth. With such writers this sin, if it is allowed to be a sin at all, is mentioned as a very trifling one! And we see the effect. Time was when the adulterer and the harlot were obliged to hide their heads with shame; but now! "They declare their sin as Sodom ‡: they hide it not." A great corruption of manners has broken in upon us, and prostitution is become a trade! God, who lately chastised us for our sins, now has graciously supplied us with plenty of the fruits of the earth, for which we profess to return him publick thanksgiving. But it seems neither chastisements nor mercies move us. Are examples of unlawful connexion between the sexes grown less numerous among us? Have those men, who first corrupt the principles of young women, or who afterwards encourage and support them in their scandalous course of living, repented of their abominations? Are not the same sins still practised continually? And, as

* James i. 21. † Ephes. iv. 29. ‡ Isaiah iii. 9.

they peculiarly harden the heart, and deaden it to every sensation of the fear of God, is it not observable how commonly such licentious persons are also sabbath-breakers? Assure yourselves, that the Lord will avenge himself of you at last, and with horrors unspeakable, if you remain in your sins. From the epistle to the Hebrews *, assure yourselves that "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."—We have received great mercies; and it is our bounden duty to be thankful; but, we are ever to remember, that thankfulness to God for mercies received, if it be real, will show itself in the fear of his name, and in conscientious obedience to his commands, otherwise the very profession of thanksgiving is but hypocrisy.

I know not what may happen to the nation in general; or to this highly favoured town in particular. But the prodigious increase of these lewd and shameful practices, in a place where the Christian religion is carefully taught, is an alarming symptom. I wish it were felt by all whom it concerns. But I fear of many, that "being past feeling they have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." Now if there be any feeling left, I exhort you to mourn and weep, and humble yourselves before God, and loathe yourselves for your abominations, and give yourselves up to God to learn his statutes, and hearken to his word, that you may be converted and do no more presumptuously; for the wicked shall certainly "be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." Samson, indeed, was saved; he sought the Lord, and the Lord was gracious, and remembered him

* Chap. xiii. 4.

according to the multitude of his tender mercies. But, surely, there is enough, in the bitter tragedy of his sufferings, to make all persons, who venture to imitate him in his besotting sin, tremble to think of their perilous situation. The most ingenious, the most acute, and I may add, the most profane and hardened libertine, must utterly fail, in seeking, from the story of Samson, the smallest encouragement to his vices.

In the Text we see, that Sampson truly humbled himself and prayed before the Lord, in the hour of his distress. He is by no means one of the most exemplary Saints: Yet a Saint he is: So Scripture hath positively declared. And here it may not be unreasonable to ask, When do the profane libertines of the present day call upon God? Who ever hears or sees signs of their praying? Who ever hears them use the name of God at all, unless it be to profane it by swearing, or by irreverent exclamation? Such persons therefore must not compare themselves with Samson: And, let me, further, inform them, that the instances of his impurities are, probably, much fewer in number than theirs; besides that more is expected from them, because more is given to them under the Christian dispensation. I have only to add briefly and plainly, that the heavy curse of God is at present upon them; and I exhort them to escape by repentance and belief of the truth.

2. There is also an instructive lesson against pride and vain-glory in the subject of the Text. How natural is it for dust and ashes to be proud, though nothing is more unsuitable, when we consider our helplessness and sinfulness. "Heaps upon heaps!"

This is the same spirit with which the successful tradesman is apt to say, "My power, and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth*." Oh! think of this, ye who have prospered in life; and see that you give God the glory. If you forget to honour him "in whose hand your breath is, and whose are all your ways†," you will justly provoke him against you, as Belshazzar did by his pride. Think, in these trying days, how many persons, once richer and more splendid than you, are now in rags and wretchedness! Tremble to think what may be your own case. If you ascribe, even secretly, to your own merit and industry what came from the goodness of God, you will provoke the Lord to anger, and he will make you feel your own helplessness and your dependance upon him.

Samson soon felt the punishment of his pride, by the intolerable thirst with which he was afflicted: and, sooner or later, all men MUST bow to God. Better, infinitely better, to do so in this life, that we may receive the humble Jesus, and live. But if we never learn this till we learn it with the rich man, who fared sumptuously every day, it will be, where we shall not have a drop of water to cool our tongues. Let persons of health, of strength, of riches, of gay appearance in life, who never felt poverty and want, be humbled before God. See how Samson prays in his distress: He felt his obligations to God; and called the place by a name which intimated the sense he had of the divine goodness to him. Learn to remember and glorify

* Deut. viii. 17 & 18. † Dan. v. 23.

God in prosperity. A time may come, in this life, when in poverty and want you may bitterly remember in what wanton pride you rebelled against the Lord. Take heed of the pride of dress, of furniture, of equipage, of substance. Surely, while you are in so vain-glorious a state, you can get no good from the Lord. Pride blinds your eyes: Satan loves to have *it* so; and what *will* you do when all the things, upon which now you so much set your hearts, shall vanish away?

3. Worldly pride is thus instructively rebuked by the case of Samson. And whosoever has indulged himself in proud contemplations on his own good management and abilities, without thankfulness to God, and without giving him glory, if, in future, he should be converted to God, must, in the nature of things, measure back his steps, in bitter repentance, and feel with pain the remembrance of all that haughty, ostentatious pleasure, in which he was sunk in the days of his ease and prosperity. But SPIRITUAL pride is also justly rebuked from the same case of Samson. He, who without any humbling self-knowledge has deluded himself into false comfort, false peace, and false liberty, may fancy himself not only a child of God, but also a very eminent one; and may be flattered by Satan's delusions with great joys and excessive delights of a distempered imagination. Many well-disposed people, probably his superiors in the grace and faith of Christ, may much admire him, while they listen to the fluent account which he is ever ready to give of his own great attainments; and hence, it happens not unfrequently, that truly humble souls are made sad; because through the sense which they have of

weakness and corruption, they cannot exult so much in the consciousness of having made any considerable progress in the Christian life.—And unless professors of religion learn more modesty, and avail themselves more of the instructions of Ministers, and of wise and experienced Christians, than many of them seem inclined to do, there appears to be no end of the false religion which is in this way encouraged.

In the mean time that observation of St. Paul is found true; "they shall proceed no further; for their folly shall be manifest to all men*:" The proud, scandalous, irregular, and irreverent conduct of these high-minded ones, at length, becomes evident to all men; and those who once admired them are convinced that they were deceived; for a haughty spirit goes before a fall; and nothing in religion, let it look ever so fair, can stand or have a solid bottom that is not grounded on humility.

It would be happy indeed, if proud, spiritually proud, people, who have boasted of their having vanquished enemies, "heaps upon heaps," become sensible what poor empty creatures they really are: then they may be brought to cry to the Lord, athirst for his grace. And, let it be ever remembered to the comfort of all who seek God, that "the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners; let the humble hear thereof and be glad."

Of those who deal largely in spiritual pride I have little hope: advice is, usually, lost upon them: they treat with a scornful sort of pity those who would advise them for their good; for there are hardly any Teachers in the world whom they look

* 2 Tim. iii. 9.

on as capable of instructing such wise persons as they are in their own conceit. I truly fear to expose divine things to the contempt of the profane, who love to hear the description and explanation of the faults of those who profess themselves to be religious. But these, in their turn, should consider, that if they themselves have not SPIRITUAL PRIDE, they have WORLDLY PRIDE; and pride in any form, being indulged without controul, will fit a man for no society but that of Satan, who is the king of pride. However, faithfulness to the Pastoral Office has required me to set forth plainly the fault of presumptuous professors of religion; and the rather, because one cannot do it by private advice, for they are above consulting Ministers. In the mean time those sincere persons, who unhappily may have been partly seduced by this proud spirit, will reap real benefit, if they are made sensible of their fault. Let them beg of God to give them a true conviction of their wants and miseries, and the Lord, who heard Samson, will quench their thirst, and satisfy their souls with good.

4. But is there here a poor broken-hearted spirit, athirst for God in Christ, conscious of sin, and ready to give up all for lost? Take courage, be strong, fear not. "The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water." To thee Christ speaks, even to thee, and calls thee to come to him for rest. But, "I see no way, my steps are in the dark," sayest thou? "I feel nothing but bondage, helplessness, and death." This is the state to which many repenting souls are brought; and I would to God they were more frequent among us, even as I have known them to

be in former times. To such, the world, its pleasures, gains, amusements, and politics, what are they? As sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.—These souls want Christ, the bread of life, to feed on, and without this they are sensible that they are lost for ever. O that we had good evidences, that many, MANY souls were in this condition! How pleasant is it to speak to such the voice of peace, comfort, joy, and thanksgiving! For, Brethren, he, who clave a hollow place in the jaw-bone, and revived the fainting spirit of Samson, by a miraculous supply of water,—He is ready to supply you also. Heard you his voice? "If any man thirst, let him come and drink:" "Ask of him, and he will give you living water." No sensation is more painful than a raging thirst; and the thirst of the soul for that divine peace and love, which is held forth in the Gospel, may be compared, in its vehemence, to natural thirst. He, who satisfies the desire of every living thing, will satisfy the thirst which he has created in your breasts. "Behold, I will do a new thing: now it shall spring forth, shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen*." Go on seeking the Lord, resting on the free promise of grace by Jesus Christ made to every thirsting soul. He will meet you while you remember him in his ways: he will meet you while you stick close to him, trusting his word, and walking to the best of your light and strength in his holy ways, and carefully abstaining from sin. His way or his time of relieving and cheering your souls it is not for you to know before hand: Relief and comfort

* Isaiah, xliii. 19.

are often afforded, when you are in the deepest extremity. It is not, without a spiritual instruction, recorded, that Samson's thirst was relieved from the jaw-bone. How unlikely? Yet so is it frequently with the soul that seeks the Lord. Believe with Abraham, in hope against hope*, and you shall know there is a God that heareth prayer.

Lastly. There may be present some backsliding souls, once truly comfortable in grace, and bringing forth real fruit to God; but who are now fallen, either through scandalous transgression, or through the cares of the world. You feel no power to believe, or to repel temptations, much less to rejoice in God with thanksgivings, as formerly. Satan "writes bitter things" against you: conscience justly accuses; and you pine in heaviness and in something like despair. Would you be revived with grace? Would you have a cheering recovery of Christ again dwelling in your hearts by faith, and would you again walk before God in the light of the living? Indeed, Brethren, you may; for the gates of heaven stand open day and night; and Jesus ever lives to intercede; and his blood is as powerful to wash out your stains of guilt, and his Spirit as able to create you anew in holiness as at first. And he is not only as able, but as willing as ever to refresh you, to give you rest, provided you do but feel the burden of your sins; provided you be but heavy laden† with a sense of guilt and unworthiness. Limit not, then, the Holy One of Israel by unbelief. His hand is not at all shortened that it cannot redeem‡. Believe, and you shall see the glory of God. Come afresh, in the name of

* Rom. iv. 18. † Matth. xi. 28. ‡ Is. l. 2.

Jesus, to the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy and find grace. For God hath not forgotten to be gracious. Think of Samson, how he fell, after God had blessed him in his youth, and honoured him with much ability for faithful service. "Remember me, O God, I pray thee." So pray to the God whose grace you once have known. Put him in mind of his own loving kindness, and his promises in Christ, and hear him say, "Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding. I am merciful, and I will not keep anger for ever." You may pray with Samson, "Shall I die for thirst, and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" Shall I thirst for thee, O God of all Grace, and shall I perish, in hopeless misery? My bones are cut asunder as with a sword, while I am upbraided with, "where is now thy God?" Shall wicked men boast always over my disgrace, and shall I fall into the hands of unclean spirits, who, like uncircumcised Philistines, will triumph over my misery, and insult the perfections of the God of grace, as if they could not prevent the ruin of a soul, whom thy Son's blood hath redeemed? This is an argument of sacred oratory, well-pleasing in the ears of God; and there is joy in heaven over it. God in Christ will hear your importunate prayers of this kind; and you shall again glorify your God. Even in the infirmities of age you may slay more Philistines, and fight more spiritual battles with success, than ever you did in your lives. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, on the Lord."

SERMON XI.

THE NATURE AND CURE OF SLOTHFULNESS.

Prov. xv. 19.

The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.

THIS is not the only passage in the book of Proverbs, where the character and conduct of the slothful man are strongly and elegantly described by Solomon. In chapter the twenty-sixth he observes, "the slothful man saith, there is a lion in the way, a lion is in the streets," showing that he is the prey of many imaginary fears, which are as much encouraged by idleness, as they are dissipated by diligence. Again; "the slothful hideth his hand in his bosom, it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth," showing that the least labour in the world is a pain and burden to a mind overcome with sloth.

The very strong representations of sloth, comprised in these two passages, and in the Text, materially receive light from each other. "The way of a slothful man is as an hedge of thorns." When he does move to do business, compelled by the necessity of affairs, his imagination magnifies every difficulty; "there is a lion in the way;" every species of labour appears to his weak mind intolerable; it grieves him so much to take his hand out of his

bosom, and put it to his mouth, that his way is as an hedge of thorns. He is at a stand, every moment, hedged up and environed with difficulties, pricked and tormented, as it were, with thorns: and yet, the latter member of the Text shows us, that these evils exist more in his own mind, than in the nature of his business. "The way of the righteous is made plain." These very difficulties are surmounted by the righteous, whose character it is to be diligent and active.

Such is the difference, in the very same course of affairs, between the laborious and the sluggard. Where the former finds a plain road, and an easy issue out of difficulties, the latter sits musing and desponding, instead of acting with vigour and spirit; and enfeebles his mind to such a degree, that he has scarcely resolution to set about any thing. In such a state of mind, fancy, the most active and the least judicious of all the human faculties, represents every thing around him in a gloomy point of view, distracts and discolours every object; and, while she disorders all his movements, she helps forward not one of them.

Men of much business know these things to be true: Nothing is to be done well without industry; and with industry it is surprising what difficulties may be surmounted. Nor can I quit this general use of my subject, without lamenting the melancholy prospect before us of the rising generation. Parents are so afraid of hurting their children by inuring them to labour, either of body or mind, or of both; and effeminacy and luxury make such ample strides among us, that it is to be feared

a sluggishness of disposition, together with all its ill consequences, are likely to increase.—Let youth be inured to labour from early life, if you wish to have them free from the evils of sloth in manhood.

But I must now proceed to a more particular use of my subject; for since Solomon says, "the way of the righteous is made plain," and opposes the righteous to the sluggard, whose "way is as an hedge of thorns;" hence with him the slothful is but another word for the wicked. Sloth in divine things,—in the care of the soul, is that, then, which I would argue against from the Text. A man may be very active and laborious for this world, may see and abhor the evils of sloth respecting temporal pursuits, and yet be himself slothful, with respect to his soul; and be devoured with the same tormenting fears and idle imaginations, that agitate others in their temporal business. There are many sluggards in religion. Many are brought to see something of their need of a change of state and heart: Their understanding is exercised about some of the great things of Christianity, and they may be very laborious in some lesser matters: But in really coming to Christ; in denying themselves; in crucifying the old man; in learning to love the Lord, and to long after the heavenly inheritance, they are slow and feeble. Here human nature, in its present fallen state, raises up difficulties in their way, which it does not raise up in things of a worldly or of an indifferent nature. Hence what we have said of idleness and its hedge of thorns, is peculiarly applicable to such souls.

By this time, then, we may form a distinct idea

of that which ought to be the object of our attention, for the remainder of this discourse. It is to show those who, through sloth, never yet began to be heartily religious, and those who once were heartily religious, but have relapsed into a slothful state, how and by what means they may be cured of this ruinous disorder of the soul.—The Lord grant it may be a word in season! True godliness will not thrive in a way of sloth: And the cure of sloth is the cure of one of the most deadly maladies of the human soul.

That the subject may appear to advantage, let us first indulge the slothful soul in a short review of his difficulties. His fancy will do this work for him at any time. That faculty is with him very laborious, however idle be his understanding, his heart, his hands, and his feet. "True: I should be glad to escape the wrath to come: and I see a person like me, worldly-minded and enslaved by various lusts, can never arrive at heaven without a new heart. But what shall I do? I begin sometimes to pray, to read a good book, to watch my conduct more closely; but I find it hard and unpleasant work; and I am soon overcome again, if I gain a little ground now and then. My conscience is hence more uneasy than ever. I am discouraged by the view of exceedingly great difficulties ever before my eyes. If one be surmounted, others rise in their stead to torment me. These difficulties I cannot encounter. They prey on my soul continually. Other persons may succeed better than I, but they have not such hinderances, respecting their tempers and their situations in life, as I have. Moreover, if I ever make a little progress, and

then cease to advance, I always find I am in a worse state than if I had never begun. Others may talk of sweetness and delight in religion; but I experience none. My lusts are so very craving, that they will not bear to be denied. You tell me of the necessity of certain duties; how can I practise them when such thorny hedges are in the way?" Every slothful soul here present, can, if he please, adapt this general account to his own particular situation, and swell it out to an immense length. Let then the principle of Solomon, briefly set forth in the latter clause, "the way of the righteous is made plain," be applied to this case; and oh! may the slothful understand and be rouzed to profitable labour.

That a person may be delivered from a state of sloth and laziness, in the ways of God, it is necessary that he should set out with faith in the divine promises. I do not mean here that "assurance of hope*," and that joy of faith, which generally speaking, is not attained in the beginnings of real religion; but I mean that faith of dependence by which the soul is animated with the expectation of success, though success be not yet attained. The language of such a soul is this: "admitting that I never yet had, to this hour, one grain of the faith of God's elect; that I have lived at enmity with my Maker, and am at this moment a child of wrath; yet even now the Lord willeth not the death of a sinner, but would rather he should turn from his wickedness and live. Where sin hath abounded, as in me, grace did much more abound. Jesus Christ gave himself a ransom for all, and his blood is able

* Heb. vi. 11.

to cleanse from all sin. He invites me, accordingly, to come unto him for life; and the Father's record concerning him is true; that he "hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." I will receive this testimony as true, and while I seek to have a particular application of his benefits to my own soul, will not doubt but that the Lord will grant it unto me. "I, indeed, am blind, poor, vile, filthy, unworthy, wretched, and corrupt in my will, and in all my faculties; nevertheless, I have, even now, the word of God's grace, in Christ Jesus, to rely upon. I will not then consider myself,—vile as I am,—in such a light, as to prevent me from trusting in this Saviour: I will not stagger at the promises of God, through unbelief; but give glory to God, believing that what he hath promised he is able to perform. Surely, the divine veracity requires this confidence, warrants this expectation, and gives me room to seek the Lord with a steady prospect of finding that peace, joy, and holiness which is promised."

Ye, whom sloth and deadness of spirit hinder from walking in God's ways, consider how the Lord, in mercy, requires you to begin; not by working with a formal and pharisaical spirit, in the hope of making satisfaction for past neglects, and of thereby meriting eternal salvation; but, by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, by receiving HIM in all his offices, and by relying on his merits for pardon, peace of conscience, and a title to eternal life; and also for strength to proceed in all manner of holiness and purity of living.—Your inability to labour needs be no impediment here. Apply to the great

Physician of souls; he will, in due time, cure you of all your evils: And, if you so far understand the Gospel plan of salvation aright, as to put in practice this first direction against sloth, you will be already in the way of righteousness. You will find your selves taken out of the way of the slothful, which is as an hedge of thorns. Till guilt, slavish fear, and enmity of heart are expelled by faith, these will unite their efforts to keep you in a state of uneasy sloth and thorny inactivity. While unbelief makes you afraid of God, not daring to hope that he will be gracious to you, you hide yourselves from him as Adam did. But trust in his grace and power, and be much in prayer: With the Psalmist, entreat the Lord, that his loving Spirit would lead you "forth into the land of righteousness." Your prospects will then brighten: You will see God in Christ waiting to be gracious, loving, and kind to your soul; not, as you now, in slothful unbelief, deem him to be unmerciful and intending your destruction. The belief of this once settled in your soul, will draw you out of a state of sloth, as sure as it is true that faith worketh by love. You will exclaim, "Shall I not seek the face of God?" when he saith, "Seek ye my face, incline your ear and come unto me, eat ye that which is good, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you." "Fool that I am! to be so backward to run with eager arms to embrace my best friend; to flee from vain unsatisfying pleasures to those which deserve the name."—Thus faith, working by love, will deliver you from the way of the slothful; and this first direction being observed, you will profit by those that follow.

2. Weigh daily and seriously the grand end in view; an abiding city; a Father God; a Saviour husband; an eternal weight of glory; a fellowship with those who stand before the throne, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands; living fountains of water; the fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. What are we doing that we are not all making haste to ensure our calling and election to this bliss? "Be astonished, O my soul, and grieve, and lament, and abhor thyself, that ever thou shouldest be so stupid, so wretchedly averse from God and thy own happiness, as to prefer trifles to substance, time to eternity! Let others talk of the rectitude of human nature; thou knowest thy nature is thus corrupt, nor can all the reasonings in the world stifle thy convictions. Nevertheless, poor soul! weary and heavy laden, who hast begun to believe in Christ, and to taste something of his gracious rest, let not a day pass over thy head without serious reflection on Eternity."

I know no means better calculated to keep down the power of sloth. For while we live with the spirit of pilgrims, seeking a rest yet to come, we cannot consistently with such views, lie still in sloth. He deserves not the name of a warrior that gives over fighting till the battle is won. Surely, by perseverance we shall find peace and joy in believing in this life, and be sealed with the spirit of adoption. But even these earnests,—the happiest moments that can be conceived on earth,—will not content us. It belongs to the nature of the soul, which hungers and thirsts after righteousness, that it should reach forth unto those things that are before, and press forward to the prize of eternal

life*. When we grow slothful again, our peace is lost: While we are diligent, our peace and comfort will abound. Let us keep the end in view, and we shall not rest contented with any lower attainments, with even the best things to be enjoyed on earth.

Many things contribute to vary the scene with a Christian here; but if he live by faith in Jesus, and with eternity in view, he looks to what is substantial and immutable. Disagreeable crosses he expects to meet with in this world; but he can bear them, as contributing to his eternal felicity. The reason why many Christians become languid and cold may be, because they are unreasonable in their expectations of happiness in this life, and have not their eye and their hope fixed on the world unseen, with sufficient steadiness. This would at once check our unreasonable expectations, give life and spirit to our reasonable ones, and quicken our pace in the plain, though narrow way, that leadeth to an end so inconceivably and eternally glorious.

3. Thus trusting in the Saviour of Sinners, and patiently waiting the gift of eternal life through his merits, prepare yourself for the journey. Once founded on Jesus for life, proceed to work the work of love to which he calls you while you continue in this world, never losing sight of the only true principles of righteousness. You will find love, gratitude, and godly fear, each in their way, to be powerful principles of action and mighty to overcome sloth. And when you are once habituated to the labour of godliness, and taste the pleasure of communion with God in it, when you experience

* Philip. iii. 13, 14.

his never-failing arm to be with you in all cases of need, your sentiments, your habits, your practice, will be directly the contrary to what they formerly were. Once you were all care and anxiety, but had no heart for Gospel-labour. Now you will labour willingly; and, in regard to care and anxiety, you will be enabled to cast them on him who careth for you.

You will also, in the progress of godliness, experience something not unlike what we meet with in temporal affairs. By use and exercise your spiritual ability will be strengthened; and those temptations and difficulties which dismayed your soul at a distance, will vanish; at least they will grow less formidable on a near approach. You will live by faith in such a precious promise as this; "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." Surely this promise shall be fulfilled in reality unto your souls. You will have done with long schemes and contrivances for the time to come, considering yourselves as creatures of a day, and remembering who hath said, "Take no thought for the morrow." That, which you will expect, and in which you will not be disappointed, will be to hear the voice of the Lord, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand or to the left." Thus shall you find the way of righteousness made plain, according to the Text.

4. But it must not be dissembled that tribulation

is the lot of every soldier of Christ, till he be called to glory. How to maintain peace of conscience, cheerfulness of mind, and diligence in the way of duty, under the pressure of the Cross, inward or outward, or both, is a lesson of skill far beyond all the powers of nature to teach. "O God of all grace, do thou teach it to thy people: Thou canst make the meanest and the weakest to excel in it!" At first, through the remaining principle of the love of ease, the believer desires above all things to be rid of the Cross. By discontent and murmuring, in his mind, against God, he obtains nothing but pain and torment. There is, however, a way of being made happy, even under the Cross. This way would be easy, were it not contrary to flesh and blood: But grace can make us willing to learn it. The lesson is simply this,—to bear the Cross with patience and resignation, till God give a sanctified issue; believing in him, who laid it on in much love. This is soon said and easily understood: But the practical part must be taught of God; and every praying soul shall be taught it effectually, and enabled to say, "all the days of my appointed time will I wait, with patience, till my change come, and endure the troubles of life till the Lord remove them."

Such are the Scripture-answers to the discouragements which lie in the way of slothful souls. Your way is at present as a hedge of thorns: All is with you, guilt and pain, uneasiness and anxiety. Reflect that, in this way, you can never be happy either in this world or in the world to come. In order to be happy you must follow the way of righteousness.

God the Father has graciously provided a propitiation and way of life: God the Son is that propitiation and way of life: And God the Holy Ghost is that loving Spirit whose office it is to teach sinners to walk in that way. Will you then be determined fully to trust the holy and blessed Trinity, and receive this grace for yourself? The Lord grant it! so shall hope, love, and joy animate your souls, and prove active principles to overcome your sloth. Eternity will brighten in your view: difficulties will vanish before faithful industry: you will labour and yet cast all your care on God.

When difficulties threaten to prevail, you will often be enabled to bear patiently what you cannot overcome; divine grace will always be sufficient for you. This is the victory over sloth, and the way to heaven. Say not "how can these things be?" but believe in God; and, in trusting, you will prove HIS truth. Consider, that every good and every perfect gift cometh from God; and, that wisdom and strength, for the day, will be vouchsafed to those who ask in the name of Jesus Christ.

SERMON XII.

THE CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF JOSIAH.

2 Kings xxii. 19.

Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord.

It is of Josiah, king of Judah, that these words are spoken. He lived in the latter time of the Jewish monarchy, when transgression was come to its full measure, and the inveterate idolatry and perverseness of the people were sealing them to the righteous doom of the seventy years Babylonish captivity. Light appears most sensibly glorious when it suddenly breaks out amidst the horrors of darkness. The character of Josiah is shown to advantage amidst the iniquity of the times. Early did he seek the God of Israel; and, though too late for the recovery of a people so far gone in wickedness, he exerted himself in as vigorous and sincere endeavours after reformation, as any of the most pious princes of the house of David. His work was not in vain: He himself reaped, and is for ever

reaping, the benefit of it. But the people were not to be restored.

Accidentally the book of the law of Moses was found by Hilkiah the priest, in the house of the Lord, and read by Shaphan the scribe before the king. It seems this people had grown so profligate and careless, that even the law of Moses itself was lost, or lay disregarded among them. With much consistency do profane men, in profane times, set aside the word of God. IT condemns them; the least light which comes from it is offensive to them: it is like the sun to a weak and distempered eye. Darkness is most suitable to those who practise deeds of darkness; but a mind, like Josiah's, taught of God, and led by his Spirit to know and to love him, turns itself to hear whatever comes from God. It feels a sympathy of spirit with the sacred word. Those who have had very little opportunity of hearing and reading it, who yet have profited already from some gleanings of divine information, will, when clearer light is afforded, receive it with eagerness. A little portion of those full means of the spiritual manna, which are loathed by careless professors of Christianity, who, in happy and peaceable seasons, have the word dispensed in abundance, is thankfully accepted by hungry souls. Even the threatenings and the awful views of Scripture find in them a willing ear and a reverent attention.

It is so with Josiah. He is now twenty-six years of age, and has reigned eighteen years; and has never yet read the law of Moses. Yet either by tradition, or by some portions of this law mixed with the temple-service, I suppose, he must have

known a little of its contents; and that little, impressed upon his heart by the grace of God, had wrought wonders in his mind. But now that he hears the whole; and observes how holy and excellent the words of God are; what promises they convey to the obedient, and what threatenings to the disobedient; when with one instructive glance he views the precious contents of the Book, and the character of its Divine Author, and compares them with the shameful profaneness, idolatry, and wickedness of the times, he rends his clothes, in the sincerest abasement and grief; and immediately orders those about him to inquire of the Lord, what was to be done, or what was to be expected. For "great," says he, "is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book." His attendants apply to Huldah the prophetess; for on her the spirit of prophecy rested; and from her they learn a full confirmation of Josiah's fears with respect to the nation: "My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched." But a message of peace is distinctly reserved for the king, which we have in the text. He should be taken away from the evil to come, and his eyes should not see the desolating judgments of God on his country.

It is a true rule,—and Josiah observes it,—that prophecy and duty are distinct things, and must not be confounded together. Had Josiah reasoned thus, "the people will perish do what I can, and therefore I will do nothing," he would have sitten still in indolence. But it is a king's duty to propagate righteousness and the fear of God, be the event

what it may. Josiah performs this duty with that astonishing vehemence of zeal and fortitude, which seems, peculiarly, to mark his character. He can make an outward change in the manners of the nation. This is all he can do for his subjects: he cannot change their hearts.

I shall not enlarge on the fulfilment of the prophecy, in the dismal days of Josiah's children. This good king himself dies in peace, before these disastrous events took place: Yes, in peace. His end was peace, eternal peace; though slain by the archers of Pharaoh Necho, whom he met in battle, with, I think, a blameable obstinacy; as appears from 2 Chron. xxxv. where the parallel story is told. Possessed of a dignity of spirit beyond his circumstances, and with fortitude and vigour of soul, to which the present low state of his kingdom did not correspond, he seems to have rashly thrown away his life. On the whole, however, he was unquestionably upright; and he died in peace, before the destined ruin of his country. Those, who know what real religion is, will be at no loss to distinguish the errors of its followers from the vices of its enemies. It is, at last, through grace that the best are saved as well as the worst; and let any man at his peril encourage himself in sin from the faults of God's people, which are recorded for a different reason;—to show that all have need of mercy, and to encourage the sincere, lest the view of their own faults should sink them into despair.

May I here be permitted to make several practical observations, which are suggested to my mind by reflecting on the pious spirit of Josiah commended

in the text? "Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord."

1. Would we know, by some clear criterion, how to distinguish the regions of real godliness from those of ungodliness? It seems very desirable that we should have a sure mark of this kind, that we may answer the treacherous reasonings of wicked men, who, perfectly careless concerning all religious principle and practice, would continually call every thing bigotry that undertakes to point out such distinction. They are not for having any serious religion at all: they, therefore, would make all religions alike, and while they tell us of the various differences of opinion, represent it rash to hold any thing certain. Against this dangerous sentiment I shall venture to mention one certain mark of true religion; at least such a mark, that where it is not, we may be confident no true religion can exist.

To make a serious thing of sin; to fear exceedingly the wrath of God, on account of it; and to look on the judgment of God as sure to attend it, if men die in their sins; and never presumptuously to set bounds to his judgments, but always to behold them as righteous, however terrible; this, I say, is a constant mark of real godliness. Thus Josiah, you see, has a tender heart; he humbles himself before the Lord; he weeps before him because of sin; he has a quick feeling of its malignity; he

knows not how to spare it. And now if I could set before you all the good men whose lives are recorded in the Old or New Testament, you would see them all agree in this. They may be very different in their natural dispositions; but here they are sure to agree. Ezra seems gentle and mild by nature: Nehemiah, with much uprightness and generosity, appears somewhat rough and vehement in his temper. But with respect to sin, they feel it alike: Look at Ezra's last chapter but one, and Nehem. 1st chapter, and you will be of my opinion. Would you, Brethren, know true religion, and not be deceived by that which is counterfeit? this single circumstance will help you much to discover it. The true spirit of religion leads men to regard sin as exceedingly dreadful, to abhor it, to loathe it, in themselves and in others as the curse of the creation. Of course they will exert themselves against it, in all their conduct, whatever little probability of success there may be, as you see in the righteous zeal of Josiah. For the new birth unto righteousness has given them new eyes, and a new taste in this matter. They cannot bear sin in any of its forms: and to any thing in the world they would sooner indulge the spirit of toleration.

I said in themselves and others; for some persons, who value themselves on knowing men and manners, are full enough of complaints against a bad world, and indulge a spirit of censure against all mankind but themselves. Their ludicrous* and

* Such a character as that of Dr. Swift seems to illustrate what I say. Any one who has read his satirical pieces may see he is not humbled and grieved for the sins of mankind: he is only gratifying his pride by the notion of his own superiority; and his ill-tempers by endeavouring to give pain to others.

merciless way of censuring shows they are only indulging the spirit of pride and malice: Sin is with them evidently a light matter, and an affair of merriment after all. The spirit of such men is plain by this: They condemn others, but see not that they themselves are involved in the same condemnation. Not so Nehemiah; not so any truly good man; I mention Nehemiah particularly, because he thus expresses himself; "I and my father's house have sinned." In the tremendous vision of Ezekiel *, a mark is set on the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done. Thus you see God himself marks those as his people, who are grieved and sincerely affected on account of sin. And hence all good men, vexed at the profane conversation of the wicked around them, are much reconciled in their minds to leave such a world as this; and they long to enter where sin shall pain them no more. But where men are so hardened as to "make a mock at sin †," it is a certain mark of an unconverted state, whatever seeming good qualities in other respects there may appear to be in their character. Thus I have given a rule, by which we may be much helped to know the spirit of true religion, and also what our own state is.

2. This hatred of sin will also show itself outwardly. If it be within, it must break out; not ostentatiously, but by such signs and evidences as are natural and suitable to existing circumstances. Had Josiah pretended ever so deeply to be grieved at the iniquity of the times, and yet made a jest of the absurdities of idolatry, without taking any

* Ezek. ix. † Prov. xiv. 9.

pains to destroy it; or had he made himself merry with the follies of his countrymen, and seemed quite careless and at his ease on the subject, he would have given no proof of sincere piety. DO THOSE deserve the name of humble and pious persons, who can be entertained with the hypocrisy or absurdity, the deceit or meanness of mankind, and give no one outward mark of grief or sadness on that account? But we see Josiah's heart is tender: he humbles himself; and rends his clothes, and weeps before God, and takes unwearied pains against the sins of the times. What signs do WE show of the same spirit? Where is OUR grief, our testimony against sin? What pains do WE take against it? And what marks can men see of OUR hatred of it?

3. I will just add that this spirit shows itself more in reflecting on the evil of sin, than on the punishments that attend it. There is no cavilling in Josiah's mind against the punishments, as though they were too severe. When men admit with reluctance the idea of suffering for sin, when they are disposed to consider the thing itself as shocking to right reason, and when they are ready to treat, as uncharitable, all persons who maintain the justice of God's punishments in a future state; such discontent and murmuring affords sure proofs that their hearts are proud, and that they feel not the evil of sin.—I need not enlarge on this head: These marks are very plain; and very descriptive of men's characters.

4. There is another very important circumstance, which appears in Josiah's spirit,—a reverential regard to the word of God. How strongly is the very feeling of his soul displayed in this point!

"Great," says he, "is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened to the words of this book." And the Lord testifies, "thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place." I seem in some degree to conceive how his soul trembled with pious awe, when he heard what strict and solemn charges were delivered in the books of Moses against idolatry and rebellion, attended with so much earnestness of affection, and such endearing motives both of gratitude and interest to unite them to their God. When he saw such solemn threatenings denounced against transgression, and considered the general depravity of his own age and time, his tender heart was humbled within him, and his godly sorrow must have overflowed in tears: and doubtless, while he was strongly apprehensive of desolating judgments for the transgressions of his people, he would not forget his own sins: His mind, enlightened with the true knowledge of God and of sin, would feel his own transgressions among the rest, and be ready to animadvert on them with godly severity. "I and my father's house have sinned."

Is not this believing regard to the word of God a very necessary part to the character of a really good man; so necessary, that where it does not exist, a man is altogether in a state of enmity with his Maker? A real worshipper of God feels his word; subjects his inmost soul to it; takes its very nature, and "has the witness in himself," that it is his word. Its holy and righteous nature points out its author; and the contrary spirit, which, alas,

never more abounded than at this day, is a certain proof of an ungodly state. When men continue to hear the most awful threatenings of the divine word, whether of sore judgments for sin in this life, or of eternal punishments in the next, and remain quite gay, careless, unmoved; when they persist in the same round of covetousness, of pleasures, and of vanity as before, cavilling perhaps at the meaning of some particular expressions, or curiously inquiring after some niceties, which do not at all affect the main point;—always taking care to keep the matter from their consciences;—there is too much reason to fear that they must be ripe for destruction.

Ye who live in known sin, and have not the fear of God before your eyes, bear witness for me, that I have, from time to time, set forth the terrors of the Lord in this house, and warned you to repent and be converted, that your sins might be blotted out. How is it that you have not been afraid of the wrath of God? Is it that you do not believe these things to be true? Your own consciences should tell you, that if the love of sin were out of the question, you could have no reasonable doubts left. Is it not shocking that men can hear these things again and again, and be told of the wrath of God against their sins, and yet go on, filling up the measure of their iniquity, as careless as if they apprehended there was no God at all?

The contempt of the Scriptures is a too general evil. They are looked on as words of course; and a pretended notion of charity, by which all men expect to find God merciful at last, is the snare that keeps thousands in their sins. How long will it

be, ere you learn, that except a man be converted he shall not enter the kingdom of God? You have no just claim to his mercy, till you seek heartily for conversion; and will you tell me, that I mistake the Scripture here? Is not all the Bible full of instances of the divine displeasure against sin; and is not the whole scheme of it constructed on this foundation? Speak the truth at once, and say you really do not believe it: You are infidels in your hearts: You dare not, however, openly avow this; and yet you remain unwilling to part with your sins. To shun all religious thought and care, is your common course. But I wish you to be roused this day, and to learn, that "upon the ungodly shall be rained fire and brimstone, storm and tempest, this shall be their portion to drink." Reflect what blessings from a good God you have experienced; and what base returns you have made him; and think on these things with prayer, till you can weep; till you can humble yourselves before the Lord with Josiah; till your flesh learn to tremble at the judgments of God; and till you can begin, not gaily and curiously, but solemnly and seriously, to ask, "what shall I do to be saved?" Then, but not till then, there will be hope of your salvation.

5. I would just mention here, what always confirms me in the truth of the DOCTRINES OF GRACE, that THEY ONLY * produce the disposition com-

* It is no valid objection to this statement to say that Josiah and other good men, whose characters are applauded in the Old Testament, could not be influenced in their practice by the doctrines of grace. For, though it may be admitted, that these doctrines were then but imperfectly understood by several excellent men, it will not thence follow that the true servants of God

mended in the text. Why would I be zealous in teaching original sin, the natural depravity of man, justification through our Lord Jesus Christ by faith alone, the new birth, and the necessity of divine influence to constitute the new creature? Is it for the value of these things as points of speculation merely? I do not know any opinions, separate from their practical uses, that are worth contending for. No: but these doctrines secure the honour of the divine character, and, as such, lay a proper foundation for humility, repentance, and faith in God. And I seriously own, if I gave up these doctrines, I should not know on what grounds to exhort men to repentance and faith. You, that have attended to these things, must see, that in proportion as the doctrines of grace have grown unfashionable, very proud, profane, and loose opinions have spread in the polite world, producing impudence in vice, and contempt of all religion. At this day, were one to ask, among what sort of men are we to find those of Josiah's description, who weep before God, and are humble because of sin? Certainly not among Arians, Socinians, or any men of a self-righteous religion; but among men who believe the doctrines of grace.—By their fruits then ye shall know them.

I have laid before you the spirit of king Josiah, and have shown, in several remarks, the nature of it, as descriptive of the true character of a godly

were not in possession of the spirit and the substance of them sufficiently for the effectual guidance of their wills and affections. It is very plain that fear of God and dependence on his assistance, together with a humble trust in his mercy, and a sense of their own unworthiness, were, in many instances, the ruling principles of those, who saw as it were "through a glass darkly."

soul. He is one who has serious apprehensions of the evil of sin; and demonstrates his heart-felt concern on account of it by a suitable behaviour. Sin itself produces, in his mind, so much grief, that he is never disposed to murmur against the Lord for punishing it. He has a real reverence for the word of God, which testifies the divine displeasure against all unrighteousness; and he is zealous for Christian doctrines, because they ALONE point out right views of holiness, just directions for the obtaining of it, and the way of deliverance from wickedness of every kind.—In fact, there are but two sorts of characters in the world; those who serve God, and those who serve him not. These two sorts, it now remains, that I should state and distinguish, and speak a word of promise to the one, and of threatening to the other, according to the divine oracles.

1. There are some, in every age, whom God has reserved to himself from the corrupt mass of mankind. These, feeling the sinfulness of their own nature, and knowing the divine purity, and what they and their fellow creatures ought to be, weep and lament for the iniquity of the times. They show a just sorrow for sin, and a serious apprehension of divine judgments against it. They cannot object to the threatenings of the divine word, nor amuse themselves with unfeeling criticisms on sin. It is to them the most serious evil, and calls forth the most afflicting sensations of which they are conscious. Nor can they easily shake off the trouble of their mind, or rest till an heart-felt acquaintance with Jesus Christ, as the Physician of diseased

souls, gives them relief. He speaks peace to his people, and heals the broken in heart. To such persons human life would be intolerable, but for this remedy. Their joy in Christ, however, even in this life, besides their prospects of eternity, surpasses all the best joys which others know. If you then resemble Josiah in character, Josiah's God is yours. "I also have heard thee, saith the Lord." He will comfort and strengthen you. Your end shall be peace. In due time God will remove you from this vale of tears, and you shall be pained with sin no more. Be followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises; and comfort one another. You have reason to rejoice, for God is with you.

2. But there are many without feeling, with respect to sin, though they are not scandalous offenders. The sight of a world lying in wickedness never gave them sorrow; and they are not grieved at their neighbour's sins if they do not suffer from them. They are ready to feel any injury done to themselves, and that excessively; but they have no regard for the honour of God, nor care how his kingdom succeeds in the world. Neither do they love the souls of their Brethren. They can amuse themselves with the vices and follies of men. So far from being concerned for the sins of others, they are callous even with respect to their own. They can soon shake off any momentary pang of conscience to which they may be subject on that account, and the threatenings of God's word they regard not. They charitably hope that these threatenings will never be executed: But let it be observed, that SUCH charity will not stand good, till the

determinations of Scripture shall be reversed: "Let God be true, but every man a liar."

To conclude. Josiah's piety could not save a people, the measure of whose iniquities was full; and though Noah, Daniel and Job, were found in a land ripe for destruction, they could but deliver their own souls by their righteousness. Reflect upon this, ye profane and ungodly sinners, and break off your sins by repentance. The piety of others will not save you; for no man may deliver his brother. In the day of wrath and perdition of ungodly men, you cannot escape unless you are found in the number of those penitent sinners who have humbled themselves before the Lord, and obtained mercy through the blood of Christ.

SERMON XIII.

LOVE OF THE BRETHREN, AN EVIDENCE OF A STATE OF SALVATION.

1 John iii. 14.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.

THE Apostle gives us here one proof, or evidence of a regenerate state, namely, the love of the Brethren; and adds a positive declaration, that the want of this love is a sure token of an unregenerate state. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren: he that loveth not his Brother abideth in death."

There are three terms in this sentence that deserve our particular attention, DEATH, LIFE, and the BRETHREN. My intention is to lay the plain scriptural meaning of them before you, in order to a clear exposition of the sentence, and confirmation of the doctrine it contains. The use of it, with respect to consolation, instruction, and correction, will afterwards unfold itself to us. To proceed then in the due order of things.

1st. Here is plainly a state of DEATH spoken of, out of which the Apostle knew that himself, and

those, to whom he wrote, had been delivered. Their love of the Brethren evidenced this. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren." Whatever be intended accurately by the term DEATH, it is obvious, at first sight, that it means a most dreadful and miserable state; something likewise that is common to mankind in general, and from which no outward forms or professions can deliver a man. This state of death commenced the moment that Adam transgressed. In the day he ate of the forbidden fruit he died. As the Lord threatened, so it came to pass. His temporal death was not indeed inflicted till some hundred years after; but his spiritual death,—which is the misery spoken of in my text,—commenced with his sin. In Adam all men thus died; became "alienated from the Life of God;" were esteemed "children of wrath;" were deprived of the divine image and communion, and rendered as incapable of love to God and delight in heavenly things, as a dead man is of the functions of animal life. This kingdom of spiritual death has a sovereign, "the god of this world*," the devil. Those who remain, till temporal death, in his service, are afterwards with him reserved unto the judgment of the great day, which will terminate in death and punishment everlasting.

But it pleased God to provide a Saviour, his only Son; and "he that hath the Son hath LIFE," as "he, that hath not the Son hath not LIFE." And it is further affirmed by St. Paul, that "when Christ†, who is our LIFE, shall appear, then shall

* 2. Cor. iv. 4. † Coloss. iii. 4.

ye also appear with him in glory." Now this life, which he merited, and freely bestows upon all who receive him, is exactly the contrary of the state of death. There is in it, by necessary implication an entire recovery from the evils of death: The pardon of sin, the restoration to the favour of God, and the imparting of a divine nature, created of God in righteousness and true holiness, are all included in this precious gift of spiritual life. Then the soul lives again, when Christ by his Spirit lives in it. The issue is the love of God and of heavenly things, maintained in the heart, ever improving here, and through all eternity. In this communion with God, consists real happiness; and the perfection of this communion in the next life constitutes the bliss of heaven.

Now let us take up the Apostle's words, and consider them. "We know that we have passed from death unto life." It seems then there is such a thing as the knowledge of salvation to be attained in this life. Indeed all real Christians either have attained, or are seeking it. And man may be said to be saved when he has passed from death unto life; from Adam to Christ; from sin to holiness; from communion with Satan to communion with God; from the curse of the law to the freedom of the Gospel; from condemnation to pardon and peace with God. Without this change, wrought in the soul here, we are well assured there can be no acquittal from punishment hereafter. Marvel not, Brethren, "ye must be born again." But, you will say, How shall we thus pass from death unto life? To answer this question scripturally is the first and

most pressing office of a Preacher of the Gospel; for unless we do actually pass from death unto life, all our religion will be found vain and nothing worth: it is all pharisaical pretence: it is all an external dressing and varnishing of a man, internally dead and corrupt, for the deceitful purpose of giving him the appearance of life. Will any persons here suggest that real spiritual life may be obtained by beginning to love the Brethren? Alas! you forget that if, by nature, you be dead to God as you surely are, you CAN have no love of the Brethren till you are first restored to this very spiritual life which you profess to be seeking.

Therefore, the first thing, necessary for us to know is, that we are thus spiritually dead, void of goodness, righteousness, and strength, incapable of being saved by any thing we do. No man can come to Christ without this conviction. But whoever is thus convicted, let him attend to what our Lord himself says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." Thus if our Lord's authority can be of any weight with regard to the question, "how are men to pass from death unto life?" it is answered simply, "by believing in him." The penitent, in self-despair, looks to him; attends to the promise of free salvation from guilt and sin made, through him, to a lost, dead, world; puts in his claim according to the invitation, and actually receives the life of God in his soul. In the very act of believing, even the moment he is brought to receive Jesus as his entire

Saviour, and not before, he passes from the wretched bondage of Satan to the happy freedom of the children of God,—" from death unto life." Mark this, O ye that feel your need of Christ, and come unto him for life. The Lord warrants, commands, invites,—and he will not fail to help you.

Now, and not before, the man is a Christian, and furnished with a living principle of good works. Faith works by love: first, by the love of God: then by the love of the Brethren. This last is the evidence of conversion insisted on in my text, and to this we will confine our attention. The only question that will need discussion here is, who are the Brethren.—I believe it is commonly thought that by the Brethren are meant mankind in general; and so persons easily persuade themselves they are good Christians, on account of that natural humanity and affection toward their fellow-creatures, which, though amiable in itself and useful to society, has nothing in it decisively Christian; nay, it may and does exist in numbers, who not only are not Christians in the Scripture sense, but who have an utter enmity against Christianity.

It is worth our while then to consider this point: because if we think the love of the Brethren means only humanity of temper towards our fellow-creatures in general, we shall certainly understand nothing at all of this whole Epistle, whose main subject is love, that pure and holy love which is shed abroad in the heart of every true convert. Numbers will and do unhappily think they have the marks of real holiness who have not one grain of it. By the love of the Brethren is meant here, and elsewhere in Scripture,

the love of true Christians, who are living members of Christ's body. I am at a loss how to arrange the Scripture-proofs of this assertion; they multiply on all sides.—Let the reason of the case speak. Man being dead in sin, and hating holiness by nature, cannot in that state love a true Christian as such. But when any one becomes a partaker of a new nature through faith in Christ, then in this, as in all other instances, being a new creature, and all things becoming new to him, he can love the children of God on account of their holiness.

Here is then a decisive evidence of a change, of a passing from death to life. Well might the Apostle say, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the Brethren: he that loveth not his Brother abideth in death." For here is a temper wrought in the soul, which could not exist but in consequence of a saving change. Common humanity can be no such evidence. Men converted or not converted, moral or immoral, Jews, Turks, or Infidels, have this: and some of the vilest and most profligate of men have yet been remarkable for a compassionate, generous temper. What clearer proof, then, can you desire that the love of the Brethren means not that love of our fellow-creatures in general, usually called humanity, but the love of the children of God, since the former sense would make the Apostle give an insufficient evidence of conversion, and the latter sense alone renders the evidence palpably and incontestably strong.

The analogy of Scripture-language requires this sense. Any person in distress may be called your

neighbour, as appears by the parable of the good Samaritan, and is, therefore, entitled to the relief of a fellow-creature. But the word Brethren constantly, in the New Testament, respects the relation that subsists between Jesus and all his Brethren, who have all one common Father in Heaven. "He is not ashamed to call them Brethren." He did so, when he ascended into Heaven, saying, "Go tell my Brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, unto my God and your God." "Whoever," says he, "shall give a cup of cold water to you, because ye belong to Christ, verily he shall not lose his reward." In the last judgment-day, this same evidence of conversion, the love of the Brethren, makes a distinguished figure. It is not said it will then be inquired, What acts of humanity have men done to their fellow-creatures in general? For, though the want of these will prove a man unconverted, yet the performance of them will never prove that he is a Christian.

Mistake not, Brethren. You may do a thousand acts of benevolence to your fellow-creatures, merely from humanity, and yet, having no love to Christ, in what you did, be ranked on the left hand among the goats at the last day. The acts of kindness insisted on in Matt. xxv, at that awful process, are such as will decisively prove a love to Christ himself; such as he can say were done to himself, because done to the least of his Brethren, real lovers of him, out of regard to him, and for his sake. But Jesus never calls Men in general his Brethren. In truth, men are to be ranked into two classes, as opposite as possible, the children of the wicked

one,—these surely are not Christ's Brethren,—and the children of God, those who in this life were reconciled and converted to God through faith in Jesus,—and these surely are Christ's Brethren. The reason, why these acts of kindness, done to the children of God, will be insisted on, is the same as that which leads the Apostle in the text, to mention the love of the Brethren as an evidence of conversion; because this love proves a love of Christ, and consequently a reception of his salvation, and a title in him to glory. The word used in Scripture for the unconverted is "the world." This term is constantly employed by St. John through this Epistle, as opposed to Brethren. In the verse before my text, he says, "Marvel not, my Brethren, if the world hate you." It is to be expected they will, because they hate God, whose divine nature is in you. "If ye be reproached," says St. Peter, "for the name of Christ, happy are ye;" it is a proof that "the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." And how naturally does St. John add here another proof of their having passed from death unto life, namely, their love of those Brethren who were hated by the world.

If I have been tedious in explaining the text, I may say, "ye have compelled me." This and most other important Gospel truths are so little understood in our day, or rather so vehemently contradicted, that a bare assertion of a Scripture truth would to many appear a most strange unwarrantable thing; and therefore it seems necessary to stop the mouths of gainsayers by a detail of scriptural arguments.

On the whole, then, the sense of my text is this. St. John speaking of himself and all real Christians, —and Christianity is still the same thing now, and to be attained exactly in the same way as it was then,—observes that though like other men, under the curse by nature, and in a state of spiritual death, they had obtained, through faith in Jesus alone, a happy change to the favour and communion of God, with a title to heaven; that the love of all the fellow-members of Christ's body, who had obtained the same change,—which love they felt in their breast for his sake, and expressed in their conduct, —was a proof, whereby they knew they were in possession of this change; and, that their faith had been real and lively; that whatever pretensions men might make to conversion, yet if they loved not the Brethren, they were plainly destitute of that faith by which the soul is converted, and that, consequently they remained under the curse, and alienated from God.—And now, to make use of the doctrine; we have here,

1st. Very comfortable matter of evidence to the children of God, whereby they may see their interest in the covenant of grace, and the reality of their faith in him. Do you find your affections drawn out towards those who appear to you to love Jesus Christ? Do you delight in their company and conversation? Can you say, with David, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and that keep thy precepts?" Are you dissatisfied with the conversation of those who know not the Lord? And do you cheerfully cast in your lot among those, who are "the salt of the earth," notwithstanding

you may be despised for so doing by worldly people? Is it a pleasure to you to do them good? Can you give them your very heart; and are these the associates with whom you could wish to spend your Eternity? Do you rejoice in their welfare; grieve in their afflictions; bear them upon your heart in prayer to the Lord; view them as Brethren, as one with yourself; would you rather suffer affliction with the people of God than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, in connection with the rich and the mighty? If this be your case, the Lord Jesus has knit their hearts and yours to himself, and to one another, in the bands of love. He has given you to love them on his account, which you could not do, unless he loved you, and you loved him.

Take comfort then. This is an evidence of your interest in Jesus, which the word of God allows, and warrants you to make use of, and to rejoice in. Cultivate this spirit of love to the Brethren. Let it increase in vigour and power, by an assiduous discharge of all the duties you owe them. Let it produce patience and long-suffering, forbearance and forgiveness. Be willing to do them good with all the faculties of your mind, body, and estate. Consider; these are to be your friends and intimates for ever: with these you trust and hope to spend a happy Eternity. How near your relation! One common Father in heaven; one common elder Brother, even Jesus; one common Holy Spirit influencing you all. How sweet and comfortable; how holy and heavenly; how durable and permanent is this connection!

Make advantage of your interest in Christ when

evidenced to you. Plead his promises. All the promises, yea "all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Be earnest then for fresh supplies of faith and love, out of Christ's fulness, that you may be enabled to enjoy the communion of saints. Your zealous indignation against sin, spoken of in my last discourse, is not a more sure token that you are delivered from the tyranny of sin, than your love of the Brethren is a proof that you are a Brother, an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. Though you should be deceived sometimes, and take those for Brethren who are not living members of Christ, this alters not at all the evidence of conversion, since your love for them was on account of a supposed relation to the common Saviour, the head of the Church. Rejoice then, O lovers of the Brethren, and take care lest, by a false humility, you stifle the evidences of divine love already afforded. You should labour to be clear in the tokens of grace received, else how can you be thankful,—as, surely, you ought to be,—for the mercies of your God? It well becomes the just to be thankful.

2d. And now let me address those who have their portion in this life. In vain do you pretend to this love of the Brethren, as an evidence of your real Christianity, who never experienced, nor sought after, that mighty change, expressed in the text, of passing from death unto life. This you understand not, and in your ignorance you despise it. There needs no other proof that you abide still in death. It is one property of men, in a state of nature, not to be sensible of the misery of their condition. This

mark, alas! suits you too well. You are Satan's bond slaves, without either love of the Brethren or any other Christian quality; and you are willingly deluded so as to think that all is well with you.

But what think you of this passing from death unto life? is it not as necessary now as formerly? Are not men still born in sin? Can the ceremony of external baptism avail, when we see the subjects of it too generally growing in wickedness, as they grow in years? Can this change pass on any persons without a change of dispositions? Must not there be a sense of the misery of the natural state, before men will desire to be delivered from it? What a condition then are you in, who have always thought well of yourselves? Oh! pray for a right knowledge of your state, that you may seek to Christ for this change. To suppose you have any such evidences of real Christianity, as love of the Brethren, till this change has taken place, would be as absurd, as for a man to pretend he has got in his harvest before the seed is sown.

And here, beware how you expect to procure this change on account of the value which you affix to the performance of any duties whatsoever. Do not suppose you can MERIT it by acts of love to your fellow-creatures. This is mistaking evidences for conditions of salvation,—the grand fundamental error of modern Divinity. I will once more repeat the true manner of passing from death unto life, laid down by our Lord. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from

death unto life." John v. 24. Go self-abased to this Saviour, and make haste to perform the first duty of the Gospel, by believing in him for all your salvation. Then shall you find its happy effects in causing you to love the Brethren.

And now consider seriously what has been not only asserted, but, I think, proved, concerning the nature of this love of the Brethren. Have your only motives hitherto been such as these that follow? "I relieve the distressed, because I pity them as fellow-creatures; it gains me a good character; it will be a step to procure me heaven; it will atone for my sins."—Alas! then you have not a grain of Christian charity. Pity and humanity are motives innocent and amiable; but if ALONE, they are ruinously defective. The other motives of self-interest, either for this life or the next, are fundamentally wrong in themselves. Did you ever know what it was to relieve any man from such motives as these, namely, "He belongs to Christ, therefore I love him. I cannot do too much for my Saviour, who has freely saved me. I love the man; for he has in his disposition the lovely image of my Saviour; he is a man of real holiness." Pretend not to any love of the Brethren till you begin to be influenced by these Scriptural motives.

But further: you not only do not love the Brethren, but you HATE them. There is no other term which so exactly expresses your temper of mind towards them. Your humanity, it is true, may prompt you to do them a kindness in distress, and your good sense may teach you to respect their social good qualities, but you may still discover your

hatred of them by this mark: There is something within you, ever prompting you to censure their strictness, their singularity, or their faults; so that you are continually inclined to blame them as carrying matters too far. If you could adjust the account truly, even you who have a partial respect for the children of God, you would find your love of them was only the love of them as men, and to be accounted for from motives of humanity, and that enmity still remains in your heart against them as Christians.

How easy then is it to show that you have not this evidence of conversion, the love of the Brethren, who hate and persecute them altogether! A million of benevolent acts to your fellow-creatures may prove you to be humane, generous men. Your contempt and aversion to God's people proves you, notwithstanding, to abide in death, and to be the slaves of sin. May you see yourselves by these marks, and learn to repent and believe the Gospel, that iniquity may not be your ruin!

SERMON XIV.

THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE.

Mat. x. 29, 30.

Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

THE directions and encouragements which our Lord, through this chapter, gives to his disciples, are plainly meant to be of a far more extensive nature and influence than the particular occasion on which they were delivered, which was the sending forth of his twelve disciples to preach in the cities of Judea. This, their first commission, was only temporary; and in the execution of it they were, probably, exposed to no very extraordinary sufferings. Their Master was well acquainted with the infirmities of human nature, and in his compassion judged it expedient that his Apostles should gradually be inured to hardships in his service.—We are, therefore, always to remember, that the rules of loving their Lord above all things; of denying themselves and following Christ; and the consequences of the Gospel in setting men at variance one against another, so that a man's foes should be those of his own household; and other thoughts of the same kind, do plainly extend the meaning of

the precepts of the Chapter to all ages and places, where the Gospel of Christ is professed, and give rules both to pastors and to people.

Almighty God, it is observable, never sends men out on arduous and difficult services, but he fits them with motives, and supplies them with strength adapted to the occasion. In every age, and under the least trying circumstances, to be a truly faithful Christian requires a wisdom, and a courage, and a patience more than human. Those who have no zeal, no life of religion; but, content with forms and names, live as worldly persons do, can have no true notion of these difficulties. They may be tempted to think, that the rules of the Church are confined to the Apostles, or at least to Missionaries going to preach among Idolaters. And too many, who profess some religion, among ourselves, though little disposed to encourage or assist faithful Ministers, are ready enough to lay all the load of service and suffering on them, and to suppose that, as laymen, they need only profess Christianity, in some general manner, with a decent moral behaviour, and never think of the duty of rebuking sin, of instructing their households, of confessing Christ, and of giving a decided testimony of their love of the Lord Jesus before all the world. If they did,—and it is what they ought to do,—they would have evidences and consolations of divine grace very different from what they now have, while they mix with the world, and are eager after its profits and luxuries, like others. But then they would bear a cross and a burden of which now they have no idea. Along with that cross and burden, however, they would feel a need of the divine motives and supports, for

which all who truly serve God, have constant occasion. What THESE are, so far as the text sets them forth, for the encouragement of true Christians, under every kind of trial, in every age, I hasten now to consider.

They arise from the practical consideration of the doctrine of a universal Providence; from a firm belief that a wise and gracious Creator exercises over all his creatures a most complete and decisive superintendence; and further, that in regard to his faithful servants he so orders and over-rules every, the smallest event, that in the strictest sense "all things work together for good to them that love God*." Our Lord directs his disciples to put their entire trust in this kind, providential, superintendency:—Consider how extensive it is: Two sparrows are sold for a farthing, yet not even so insignificant a trifle as one of these shall fall to the ground without your Father: Dismiss all your fears and anxieties: "Ye are of more value than many sparrows."

God is the Father of all true disciples and followers of Christ, not merely by creation,—for so he is the Father of all his creatures,—but he is THEIR Father in a peculiar sense: he has bestowed upon them "the adoption of children†" on account of the merits of his own beloved Son: he is perfectly reconciled unto them: he makes all things, that happen to them, contribute to their spiritual improvement, and render them fitter for heaven; and lastly, he is preparing for them everlasting mansions. This same gracious God and Father permits not a sparrow to fall till he himself has decided upon its existence: And well, therefore, may we conceive

* Rom. viii. 28. † Ephes. i. 5.

that the minutest and most trifling things belonging to his servants are under his particular care and observation: Well may they in patience possess their souls, while they reflect that the Providence of their God is particular, special, minute; and that no one thing is left out of the account. Not a hair of their heads shall perish. The great comfort of this to a true believer is evident. He, who walks by faith, not by sight, sees God in every thing that befals him. No one thing is left to chance. What we call trifling things are frequently very important: And it is well known how often the most important things are brought about through means which appeared little, and which otherwise we should have thought of no sort of consequence. The inference is this,—All that a true believer has to do, is to please his God in his walk, through life, by a sincere endeavour to do HIS will in all things, neglecting no lawful means of avoiding evil, or of promoting good. It is his duty to be "wise as a serpent, harmless as a dove;" and dismissing all careful anxiety, to be resigned and composed in the midst of difficulties, as if no difficulties existed, knowing that every thing respecting himself is determined by his Father's Providence. Do not you see how divinely comfortable, and how well supported must be the minds of those, who truly believe the existence of this Providence; and who confide in it for all their present and future happiness? Such persons consider themselves as under the conduct of a heavenly Father, of infinite wisdom and goodness, who cannot do otherwise than promote their interest by the best means. But, take away this doctrine of Providence, how gloomy, how wretched the state

of men! What a condition is that, where a man is to live as it were by chance, tossed about in the dark, without hope; a poor frail mortal, amidst a thousand perils? No wonder, if persons thus neglecting the doctrine of Divine Providence are unfitted to bear even the common evils of life; and, much more, those trying hours of danger and persecution which may happen for Christ's sake.

I. The subject of the text being generally opened, I have something more to say by way of illustrating the Scripture-doctrine of Providence, and then,

2. I may speak a little to two sorts of persons concerning it.

1. It is become exceedingly fashionable among us to deny or to lessen the notion of Divine Providence. It is one of the growing evils of the times. Men endeavour to cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before them *, and to make God a cypher in his own world. Nature, fortune, fate, chance, any absurd or unmeaning suppositition, rather than the only and true God, shall have the credit of being the cause of every thing that befals us. It may seem incredible how low we are fallen, in this respect, in this dark age. For I shall venture to call it a dark, not an enlightened age; because we are fond of darkness, in our most essential concerns. We desire to live without God in the world: And the devil and all the powers of darkness love to have it so, in order that men may serve the prince of darkness with all their might.—Nevertheless, most assuredly the Lord is King, and the earth may be glad thereof. It comforts the hearts of true believers, particularly in the present gloomy season of affairs,

* Isaiah xxx. 11.

to think that the Lord is King, and will do all things well, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his Church.

The distinction between a general and a particular Providence, as though God made the world like a machine, and then set it a going, and took no care of it afterwards, but left all to some general laws without his interference, has no warrant from Scripture. If SPARROWS, if HAIRS of THE HEAD, be under his special Providence, what can be exempt from it? No one thing is left to chance. God is never reduced to such a condition as to be surprised or disappointed. He orders all things, suits all the motions of mankind to one another, has steady ends in view, and never fails of those ends. Hence you may pray to him under particular trials; and if it be done in faith, with reverence and resignation to his will, you may comfortably expect he will hear you, and certainly he will answer your prayers in some way to your profit. David prayed that God would turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness, and it was so. This is indeed to make the Lord to be God, near and present unto us, and not like an idol, or the gods of Epicurus, who took no care at all of human affairs. He, who would understand this subject more fully, if his taste is at all regulated by the word of God, and if Christ and salvation are at all precious in his eyes, would do well to read the historical part of Scripture over with this view.

What I have further to lay before you, on this very important subject, shall consist of a few striking facts, with some hints suggested by them: for indeed, it is not by general reasoning, but by a detail of

what has really happened in the world, that the doctrine of Providence is best understood.

From the very beginning of the world the Providence of God appeared. Man was not left to chance. The nature of his situation in the garden of Eden, and the consequences of obedience or disobedience were signified to him; and Providence never failed to convince him, that the Lord was his Law-giver and his King; and that nothing could escape HIS penetration. The flood, which God in his wrath brought upon the world of the ungodly, and the particular preservation of Noah, strongly inculcate the same doctrine of Providence. The most minute things concerning those that love and fear him, appear from this history to be ordered by the Lord. The preservation of Lot in Sodom, and the destruction of the ungodly cities of the plain by fire and brimstone, are recorded, as instructive monuments to all ages. They show that "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous," and that, with HIM, sin is no slight matter; but, that if men persevere in it, without repentance and humility, they call down from heaven the most signal display of divine vengeance. The same lesson is taught both in the punishment of hard-hearted Pharaoh and his people, and also of the seven nations of Canaan, who lived in the most filthy abominations. Have WE learnt that Jehovah has failed since that time in power, and in his love of justice and purity? Or do we believe what was lately said in that country, whose contempt of Providence we seem to be too ambitious of imitating,—"that God is now grown too old to govern the world?" What? "*Hast

* Isaiah xl. 28.

thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no end of his understanding." It is an awful truth, that the God of the Scriptures is patient far beyond our narrow thoughts, and that he exercises great long-suffering; but,—in all ages,—abused patience becomes at length a holy indignation; and one of the most useful lessons of the subject before us is, that wicked men, though prosperous for a time, may be assured that it will not always be thus; that God will come with vengeance on the wicked when the measure of their iniquity is filled up; and that particularly in the world to come his wrath will smoke against them for ever.

Through the extreme depravity of our fallen nature, even in the early times of the world, ungodly sinners uttered hard speeches against God; and Enoch, before the flood, was inspired to prophesy that the Lord would come to execute vengeance on his despisers, and to convince those who used these hard speeches against his Divine Majesty. Alas! how has this very same hardened and fearless spirit increased of late years among us! and how do the words of Scripture seem to strike against a rock, while proud hearts scorn and neglect them! But whether men will hear or forbear, they shall know that there have been prophets among them. The same God who brought a flood on the old world, and who rained fire and brimstone on Sodom, and who also plagued proud Egypt with its hard-hearted King, and who destroyed the abominable Canaanites, —this same God ever lives, and never grows old or weary: His eyes are upon the nations, and all

the ways of particular persons. That man must have rendered himself stupid beyond measure by his wickedness, who cannot see, that the same Glorious and Holy God is at this time, by his Providence, punishing the nations all around for their contempt of his name and word, and Sabbath and holy laws, and particularly for their contempt of his Son Jesus, through whom he offers life and salvation to sinners, and whose blood is so shamefully despised by multitudes of nominal Christians.

The stories I have mentioned are old stories indeed, but authenticated by every mark of credibility; and the wisest and most learned men have shown this so fully, that modern infidelity can only answer by a sneer, a jest, or a cavil. Feel it then, ye Sabbath-breakers, ye libertines, ye drunkards, ye despisers of God's Holy Word. His eyes are upon you *, his Providence must be against you, while you remain impenitent; for he is unchangeable. Sooner or later he will make a dreadful example of you, rich or poor, without respect of persons, as he did of the wicked of old; and I would to God ye were disposed to fear and tremble before the axe be laid to the root! But this is not much to be expected of many. It is rather expected of us, most unreasonably, that we should apologise for uttering severe truths. If, like Elijah, we be "very zealous for the Lord God of Hosts," men are apt to think us harsh and uncharitable, when a little reflection might convince them, that greater proofs of genuine charity cannot possibly be given, than are implied in these honest, fervent, repeated, exhortations to the care of the soul. Oh! the times of insensibility!

* Amos ix. 8.

What an awful thing it is for men to have long heard Scripture truth in vain! But I leave these warnings with you: They can do you no good, if you believe not seriously the Providence of God: Nevertheless, it is at your own peril if you despise them.

But this subject of Providence has a cheerful aspect, as well as a terrible one. I see Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and his Brethren, led step by step, with fatherly care, in the minutest articles, by Divine Providence. The last instance, that of Joseph and his Brethren, is particularly descriptive of the sublime and comfortable doctrine before us. Look at men and means. You see the sons of Jacob, in the height of malice and envy, persecuting a pious youth. And none but a person truly discerning the hand of God, secret but unerring, gentle but invincible, could reconcile his mind to the dark scenes, in which, for a time, wickedness seems to triumph, and real goodness to suffer unregarded. But the mystery is unravelled. The subordinate actors, the Midianites who brought Joseph into Egypt, and Potiphar's wife, who vilely asperses him, are made subservient to the designs of Providence. "It was not you that brought me hither, but God," says the once suffering, now prosperous Saint. It was a scene of much mercy to the house of Jacob, though in the course of it, the Brethren are humbled and made to feel the baseness of their conduct. "Whoso is wise," says the Psalmist, "will ponder these things, and they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." This is his concluding reflection on the 107th Psalm, which richly opens to us the counsels of God, in his dispensations, to

travellers, mariners, persons brought to the grave by sickness, and others. There is an end, worthy of God, answered by these dispensations; and men, brought low by affliction, and applying by prayer to the Lord for forgiveness and mercy, are delivered. Then is fulfilled what is written, "Call on me in the time of trouble, so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise me." The very highest and most prosperous, such as Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, to show what was in them, were suffered to proceed awhile, in such over-bearing pride, as we could never have patience to endure. But Jehovah at the fittest season, brings them down: and if men were not insensible to his handy-work, if they would but study the language, in which the Almighty Governor of the world has been pleased to speak to his subject creatures, they might, in many instances, and to all practical purposes, read the Providence of God, as plainly as if they saw the Lord face to face; and as if the whole of his dealings were perfectly an object of sense.

And, in Scripture-history, this Providence is equally displayed in kingdoms and large communities, as it is in single families and single persons. Time would fail to set forth the instances of each. The particular providences concerning Moses and Daniel show his hand as exactly careful and interposing, as the whole dealings of God with the chosen race of Israel. Miracles, visions, the manifest agency of angels, are commonly shown us in the Old Testament. The canon of Scripture was not then completed. But since the word of God is finished, and the everlasting Gospel is on record, the same universal Providence is carrying on in a more

secret manner. Still however, God has given us such abundant proofs of his government of the World in general, and of his care of the Church in particular; and has revealed to us such repeated discoveries, that "of him, and through him, and to him are all things, and that the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and the thoughts of HIS heart from generation to generation;" that it were highly unreasonable to suppose, that, in these latter days, God has left the world to shift for itself. After having shown us how he has supported it for ages, can it be imagined that God is not the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; or that men are not as helpless now, and as much needing the Divine Providence as formerly? That we may not fall into this error of the wicked, we must take heed to the WORD, the invaluable legacy of God to mankind. This is the glass by which God is steadily to be seen, and by this key we are to open the dark things of Providence, and to learn constant lessons of practical utility.

But miserable, dark, helpless sinners, as we all naturally are, we have need to look on God in Christ, that we may behold him with comfort; for out of Christ he is a consuming fire. And it may well be supposed, that the steps of Providence would be remarkable concerning the Lord Jesus, in all things which concerned him. The long train of events and circumstances concerning the Messiah, predicted in the Old Testament, and fulfilled in the New, point out to us a constant interference of Providence. Though HE was crucified by wicked hands, and slain, yet "it was by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God." In another place it

is said, they "fulfilled all that was written of him." The affairs of the Church of Christ are also the constant objects of Providence; and this, the last Book of Scripture,—the Revelation of St. John,—distinctly teaches us. What has been done for the Church, from the age in which St. John lived to the present time, and also what will be done, are there recorded. It is not so dark and unintelligible a book as many are pleased to represent it. There are various parts of Scripture considerably more difficult. It would be one of the best employments of studious and reading persons to attend to it from beginning to end. With the assistance of the labours of learned men, and the lights of history, the greatest part may be made intelligible to judicious, well-disposed, dispassionate, persons. This book demonstrates that God's Providence does, and ever will, take care of his Church. In the darkest passages it is also interspersed with the plainest and most precious rules of faith and patience; and it particularly inculcates the all-important doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone, and the momentous, inestimable consequences of his atoning blood: and lays open the joys and triumphs of the Saints in heaven.

But as there is no where more precious comfort to true humbled believers than in this book, so in no part of Scripture are there more terrible denunciations of Divine Wrath against unbelievers, idolaters, and "whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*;" and all who despise or neglect the salvation of Jesus Christ. Here hell is opened in its horrors, and heaven displayed in its charms; the depth of misery and the

* Rev. xxii. 15.

height of joy. God's Providence, in its history, from the beginning of the world to the end, is closed in this book, and it is then added, "he that is holy, let him be holy still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still."

I would now speak a few words by way of application. And O! that it may be to the deep and profitable conviction of every individual who says to the Almighty, "depart from us*;" and who impiously asks, "how † doth God know?" After all the evidence that God is constantly giving of his government, and all the illustration, which he affords of it from Scripture, is it for you to say, "things come by chance?" See you no hand of God in any thing that befals yourself, or your family, or nation, but ascribe your good success to your own merit, and your bad success to fortune? How stupid and senseless is it for men, maintained and protected by the King of kings all their days, to notice nothing of his dealings? Shall we admire the works of art in our fellow-creatures, and the skill of wise and able persons in arduous affairs; and shall we neglect to observe the works of the great Artist; of infinite Wisdom?

But it is not my business only to show how foolish, but also how wicked and ruinous this neglect of Divine Providence is to men! Since it has grown among us to a height beyond the example of former ages, I may appeal to yourselves, Hath not vice also, within your own memories, increased more and more? When God makes an example of a wicked man, by punishing him in the natural consequences of his vices, is it not usually reckoned uncharitable

* Job xxi. 14. † Psalm lxxiii. 11.

among us, to make a single reflection on the hand of Providence! What does all this pretended charity amount to, but to the exclusion of God from his own world; and does it not lead men to magnify themselves in their own eyes, and to diminish in their thoughts the evil of sin, and almost to forget that a God exists! But how miserable are your prospects! At present, whatever comforts you may have, they do not arise from pious thoughts of your Maker. You have no lively faith in Him. You may perhaps be cheered for a short time in a false way, by prosperity; by the gratification of your lusts and passions; by want of thought; by dissipated company; by good health, and a plentiful flow of animal spirits: But how long will all this continue? And if you should die in the midst of your vanities, what a sad scene will be unfolded? In hell to lift up your eyes, being in torments, and then to know and feel the wrath of that God whom you have despised through life, and whose laws you have constantly broken,—what a prospect is this?

Suppose you should live to an advanced age; in that case, your comforts will die before you. The days will come, when you shall say, "I have no pleasure in them." Health will decay, spirits will flag, cross events in life will make you feel your wickedness. In this trying state the real Christian has a God to go to; you have none. Conscience tells you that God is your enemy; and you have not a right to expect any thing from him but wrath. That grand scene of Providence, which orders the affairs of the whole world, and of every single person in it, is all against you; and death, and judgment, and eternal misery are your prospects.

Are these things trivial in their nature; or will any wise man, in the contemplation of them, find matter for jest and merriment? Will they lose their terror at their approach by your slighting them at a distance? Will they not then more fiercely torment you? Say not that godliness leads to melancholy. No; the reverse is the truth: godly men have that which cheers them in their saddest hours; and you have that which at times strikes your heart like a dagger in your gayest moments. Hence among such as you, self-murder is no very uncommon crime. In proportion as men forget the doctrine of Providence, their temptation to this basest of sins grows stronger and stronger; and therefore it is observable, that in the land of our enemies, of late years, as they have shaken off the thought of God's Providence, self-murder has been so common that they were obliged to check it by new and extraordinary regulations.

Will you proceed thus to the end unmoved? Oh! take that proud heart to task, and bid it soften. Desire to burst that bubble of pride and false honour, that enchantment of false pleasure, which leads you captive at present. At length, retire from company, and spend some leisure time alone in secret meditation; and call each day upon your conscience to do its office. Examine your accounts, and see how they stand between God and you. Then bend those stubborn knees, so unused to prayer, and endeavour to bring that worldly mind of yours to a work, of which it knows so little,—to humiliation and confession of sin. If you scarce know at first what to pray for and how to pray, because you are so perfectly unused to supplication, help yourselves by

the Psalms, by the Book of Common Prayer, by other sound forms of prayer, till you become furnished with proper ideas, and know,—what is indeed the right method for secret prayer,—how to pour forth some real feelings of your hearts before God. Speak to him in the name of his Son Jesus: Venture in that way, till you gain by experience some practical knowledge of God and his dealings with men. Provoke him not to anger by continuing still to live in any known sin; and make it your object to SEEK, that you may FIND him before you die.

Christian believers, the subject of this dicourse speaks to you nothing but comfort. All your trials, temptations, crosses, inward and outward sufferings are ordained in number, weight and measure, by your God. Surely, he values you more than many sparrows; and, if "the very hairs of your head are all numbered," what is there of your minutest concerns that is not ordered by the Providence of God? He it was, who directed the first circumstances of your conversion by the influences of his Spirit. He ordered the Scripture-passage, the Sermon, the Book, the occasion, the friend,—whatever it was,—by which you were first awakened to real seriousness and godly concern. His Providence has been with you, watched over you, and continued to supply you with pardoning and sanctifying grace. He has delivered you from many snares; and you can recount many seasons in which he has, particularly, afforded you help and comfort. What remains but to be cheerful, and patient, and submissive to his will? "He shall guide you by his counsel, and after that receive you to glory."

SERMON XV.

FAMILY INSTRUCTION, RECOMMENDED FROM THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM.

Genesis, xviii. 19.

For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.

It is a very honourable character which the Lord here gives of Abraham, the father of the faithful. He is, in truth, one of the most eminent Saints of Scripture, and is particularly proposed as the pattern of believers in all ages. He was justified before God by faith, having nothing whereof he might glory in himself, as St. Paul carefully and repeatedly assures us. But being thus justified in Christ Jesus, the promised seed, in whom alone all the nations of the earth should be blessed, he became a new creature, and produced the works of the new creature. This he did in an eminent degree, as in other respects, so in this, for which the Lord makes honourable mention of him in the text, namely, the religious instruction and education of his children and family. And the Lord in this passage, admits him to a familiar converse with

himself concerning the destruction of Sodom; and observes that his religious care of his household would be attended with the very best effects,—the propagation of piety and justice to posterity, and the fulfilment of the divine promises to them.

Thus far we see, in a very striking manner, how the faithful discharge of this great duty of a master of a family is esteemed honourable, by the Lord himself; and how extensively beneficial to mankind are its happy consequences in a variety of ways.—I dwell no longer on the particular character and case of Abraham, but proceed to press the duty on Masters of families among ourselves, and this may conveniently be done by stating and explaining several practical observations and directions. Parents and Masters are peculiarly concerned in this subject: I wish they may feel themselves so to be: Many weighty reasons call upon them to attend to it. Here is a pattern of great antiquity set before them, highly commended by the Lord on this very account; and the benefit accruing to posterity is described in the text as connected with the discharge of the duty. Let me beseech your attention, while I suggest to you some particular and important branches of family-education.

1. I would speak to christian people who are Masters of families, and who have had some experience of the power of godliness on their own souls. You cannot but be sensible that it is as much your duty as it was Abraham's, to command your children and your household after you, to keep the way of the Lord. Besides the same general reasons, which may be laid before ALL men, YOU have

special reasons. You know the value of godliness; the comfort of having a God to go to in time of trouble; the benefit of a Saviour and Mediator to atone for your sins, and of the quickening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Ghost; and the hope of rest and glory beyond the grave. I am sure, if this be the case with you, you must have been beforehand with me, in knowing it to be your indispensable duty to instruct your children; and it is impossible, if you truly fear God, but you must, in part at least, have discharged this duty. But I fear there is lamentably too little done in this way among us: it is a work which requires labour, care, attention, much more industry and self-denial than is needful for hearing the word of God, and attending divine worship. When you set yourselves to it, you find it requires an exertion of spirit, which the slothfulness of nature in religious things does not easily admit; and therefore many of you, I fear, do far less than you might and ought to do in this business. I shall, in a few particulars, endeavour to assist the recollection, to promote good intentions, and to be a spur to negligence.

The first thing I would mention to you is family-prayer. It is doubtless, in itself, a reasonable and highly expedient thing, that families, who form little societies within themselves, should in some solemn way own their dependance, and acknowledge their obligations to the Lord of the Universe. How is this to be done so properly as by daily calling upon God in prayer together? To you whom I am now addressing, I need say no more, by way of recommending the practice. That it has grown so much

out of use in the polite world, cannot be to you a serious objection against it. What, if the higher classes of persons, throughout Europe, are endeavouring more and more to resemble the beasts of the field, if like them they eat and lie down to sleep, with no reflection on their Maker or address to Him; and further, if they are grown so proud, as not to care for God, nor to let God be in all their thoughts, —WE have not surely so learned Christ, as, in a matter of this sort, to be in subjection to them, or to be carried away by their example! You think yourselves, perhaps, unfit to be the mouth of your families in devotion: It is acknowledged that many are unfit for such an undertaking; and there are those who are forward to attempt things for which they are not qualified: But we have good and sound forms of prayer, which you may make use of on these occasions. Surely, if you attend to this practice in a hearty, conscientious way, avoiding an unmeaning, cold formality, which is the too common bane of things of this nature, you may expect the divine blessing to accompany it to yourselves and your households. I fear the thing itself is by no means so commonly practised as it ought to be; and yet the time which it requires needs not be long. How much more time is often unprofitably employed, let our consciences say!

2. Let Christian Parents attend particularly to the instruction of the younger part of their household. If you yourselves are blessed with spiritual light and comfort in religion, will you withhold them, so far as in you lies, from those, who have a nature evil from the womb, and are exposed to

innumerable temptations on all sides? The evening of the Lord's day, while the children of ungodly parents are running about the streets, and learning and practising evil, is the very time, Parents, in which you should more especially instruct yours in the way of the Lord. And your instruction, at these times, will be likely to be attended with more effect, provided they see you consistently zealous and hearty in the work; not like mere actors, who play a part, and, at other times, show nothing of a religious spirit. On the week-days, from time to time, in various circumstances of life, you may often take occasion to press on their minds the fear of God; and it is impossible but their consciences must be in some degree affected, if your life and conversation, by its steadiness and consistency, prove you to be in good earnest.

But if you have indeed their welfare much at heart, you must tenderly watch over them with respect to the besetting evils of their childhood. Idleness must not be suffered in them. You will, for conscience sake, inure them to labour. Rebellion also against lawful authority,—cost you what it may in feeling for their pain,—you must subdue by the rod, if it cannot be done by milder methods. And take care to teach them distinctly the nature of strict honesty and punctuality in their dealings. If they see you pleased with their dexterity in actions not quite honest and just, you will encourage them to proceed further; and dishonesty in little things may soon produce very serious consequences. For however trifling the matter immediately concerned may be, the affair itself of honesty in word and deed is

inexpressibly serious, and so you should always represent it to them. I hope I need not exhort you to guard them, from their earliest years, against profane, filthy, and blasphemous language. It is to be hoped they have no opportunity of learning such under your roofs.

I mention two things more, Cruelty, and Selfishness. Children from early life often show a propensity to both these; and so prove their evil nature. Show them what obligations they are under to God for his mercy, and how necessary it is that they should be merciful. And, instead of instructing them with so very much anxiety how to get and to keep money, and showing real anger or displeasure against them seldom but for waste and extravagance, show them rather how to be generous and friendly. As they grow in life, they will learn carefulness by experience. Guard them, however, against evils in both extremes; but take care, lest you teach them to value this world much, and the next not at all.

3. As your children grow up, if you have laid a good foundation in their conscience by storing their minds with the knowledge of the law of God from the most tender years, you may then proceed further, and endeavour to lead them into the knowledge of the way of salvation more distinctly. They will have done so many things for which conscience will accuse them, and have given such evident proofs of their FALLEN NATURE, by the time they come to the age of thirteen or fourteen years, that you may venture to show them more explicitly this great truth; from their own experience. Always impress it on their minds, that they are sinners by

NATURE as well as by practice. Show them that the proofs of this are to be found in every page of Scripture. Tell them that experience and observation are continually proving the same thing. Let them be informed,—I am speaking to those who know themselves,—that you also find yourselves, by nature, evil, blind, helpless, and guilty before God. Show them that this is the knowledge, which is to make men humble, and modest, and poor in spirit, and fit to receive Christianity. Convince them, by every means in your power, that there must be an heartfelt conviction of this, in order to the reception of Christ; and that pride and the want of knowing ourselves are the causes of all the mischief in the world, and keep men from God. Let them know how yourselves found peace and relief to your troubled consciences by Jesus Christ alone, and exhort them much to private prayer for spiritual illumination, and show them all these things in connection with the word of God. Try if you cannot make them reverence that book, and lead them from early life to an acquaintance with it. If you know any thing of the pleasantness of wisdom's ways, by experience, you cannot but feel it your duty to show them the riches of Christ, and to recommend him as a Saviour to them for their use and benefit. Be unwearied in admonishing them, that HE alone can make them happy, and that he is willing so to do; and let them see how earnest you are for their conversion, comfort, and establishment in real godliness.

4. The office of Confirmation in our church, were it rightly improved, might be of considerable benefit

to the rising generation. Let parents remind their children of it from time to time, both those who are as yet too young for it, that they may be prepared for future confirmation, and those who have already been confirmed, that they may consider the obligations it lays them under. Though with too many it is a matter of mere form, it may be turned to good account, as I have known in some instances; and I question not but various Ministers, who have attended duly to the catechizing of youth, have found the happy effects of it. But I am to speak here of the duty of Parents concerning it. Let your children know why they were baptized; what a state of sin and guilt they are naturally in; what privileges of grace are offered them by Jesus Christ; and what their duty is with respect to these things. For instance, when you find them tempted to follow the fashionable vanities of the world, inform them that they are engaged, as persons baptized in the name of Christ, and also obliged by their own personal act, to renounce the pomp and vanity of this wicked world; and that if thousands follow these things and desert their Master, that will be no excuse for them to be unfaithful to their Saviour. On this plan you may distinctly inform them what is the real nature of Christianity, and how bound they are, by the most solemn ties, to serve God in the Gospel of his Son. Teach them particularly to avoid a mere formal spirit in this work, and not to rest satisfied till their hearts are impressed with the importance and excellency of the Christian religion.

So many are the snares, on all sides, laid for youth, that no means should be neglected to restrain

them from walking in the broad way to destruction. You, who have the light and comfort of the Gospel, are bound to perpetuate it to posterity if possible. Do what you can: Declensions and corruptions, I fear, there will be: Nor is there a more pregnant proof of the entire corruption of human nature than this,—that after all possible pains taken with youth, yet the life and power of godliness seldom holds for two generations together. Children may profess and respect the same thing which their truly pious parents did; but seldom indeed do they keep up the same simplicity and earnestness of religion. Human nature too often returns to its original state of corruption. If the life and power of the Gospel appear in any particular generation, it is well if, in the succeeding one, there be found more than form and shadow. Whether a considerable cause of this degeneracy be not, that sufficient pains are not taken for the instruction of youth, it behoves Parents most seriously to consider.

Confirmation takes place at an age, when the Passions are beginning to grow strong; and just before the dangerous period of life, when self-conceit, and headstrong self-will, and violent passions, too often overpower every good principle in the soul. Oh! how seasonable for Parents then to be much in prayer for their children, and to do all that in them lies to make it a most serious and solemn act. Good catechetical instruction should not be spared. It will be a dismal reproach, on professors of godliness, to have heard sermon after sermon themselves, and to have been remarkable for attendance on religious means, while they have left

their own families uninstructed in the fundamentals of religion. And, that many young persons do grow up and remain in this ignorance, is but too plain. For, do not we see, from time to time, persons professing godliness, and whose consciences have been 'struck' under the Divine Word, and who have WALKED hopefully for a season, yet, in a manner that may seem unaccountable, flying off again into strange fantastic delusions, and forsaking the solid instruction which they have had for years? These having itching ears, are ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth, changing their opinions and their connections in religion, I had almost said, as often as they change their garments! They are evidently without solid principles of any kind: They have had no foundation: They never thoroughly imbibed the principles of the Christian religion: They never knew the law of God well in all its parts and branches: They know not the wickedness of their own hearts, the grace of Jesus Christ, or the influence of the Holy Spirit. Early instruction would be one good means to prevent this shameful unsettledness in religion, of which we have too much cause to complain. A fantastic preacher would meet with little encouragement from minds which have been well informed in tender years. Such minds would find no entertainment either from enthusiastical rhapsodies of the pulpit, or from whimsical books of religious delusion. It is the ignorant, the shallow, and the empty who are caught by these and similiar temptations, and ensnared before they are aware.

5. And are not YE bound to take care of the

religious education of your offspring, O Parents, YE; if any hear me, who live without the fear of God before your eyes? Yes, and ye should learn to feel your own wickedness and repent, that ye may be enabled to discharge this duty. Justly may many parents say to their children, "Alas! we taught you nothing that is good, and we set you an example of all that is evil." What a meeting will ungodly parents and ungodly children have in the next world! How likely it is that, in everlasting torments they should mutually upbraid and torment one another! This is a dreadful thought!

I must here add also the care due to apprentices and servants. Masters, they are committed to you. It would be a practice fitter for a heathen than a christian land, to use them only for your own gain and convenience, and treat them like beasts of burden, as if they had not souls accountable to God, and capable of eternal misery. You stand, in this view, before God, as their parents. It is your duty to see them instructed. If you would be justly charged with cruelty, for neglecting their bodies, much more for neglecting their precious souls. We have institutions for the education of poor, helpless, neglected, children. The utility of such things is evident. The disorderly and scandalous proceedings in our streets, and on the Lord's day most of all, show the want of instruction, as well as the growth of indecency and licentiousness in both sexes from very early life. You who are rich and prosperous, and have made use of these boys as apprentices, for your own purpose and advantage, may be careless about all these evils; but you will find, one day, that

you will be called upon to give an account of the means which you have used to prevent them. These children are consigned to you by Providence, and dreadful will be the account you have to give, if the ruin of their souls be required at your hands. What pains do you take with your apprentices and household servants? Do you catechize them yourselves? Do you carefully observe the rule of our Church? You will find it in the prayer book a little after the catechism. "All fathers, mothers, masters, mistresses, shall cause their children, servants, and apprentices, which have not learned their catechism, to come to the Church at the time appointed, and obediently to hear and be ordered by the Curate, until such time as they have learned all that is here appointed for them to learn." Do you observe this rule with your household? Or do not some put their apprentices out to board at houses where they can learn nothing good, and suffer them to wander about the streets in the indulgence of every sinful vanity, without any concern how they act or what becomes of their souls, only being careful that they attend the duties of their trade when required? If evils of this sort do not abound among us, I shall rejoice: If they do, what shall I say of you? What hearts have those that act thus! O love of money, "thou root of all evil," what a hardener of the heart art thou! Shall I not remind such of the rich man*, who lift up his eyes in hell, being in torments? And will you not blush, weep, and abhor yourselves and repent? And shall any men who act in this manner, boast of their zeal for the Church of England? Our

* Luke, xvi. 23.

Church has many such hypocritical friends, who are her greatest disgrace: Support the Church of England with your prayers; your instruction of your household; your zeal for her doctrines; your attendance upon her ordinances; and, lastly, afford your countenance to her faithful Ministers. This is the way to escape the character and the doom of hypocrites.

6. And for an encouragement to you, Parents and Masters, in the work of educating and instructing youth, though I dare not say that your labours will be certainly attended with success in their conversion, yet surely you have good reason to hope for it. The language of Scripture in connecting believers with their children, in such passages as these, "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee;" "the promise is to you and your children," and the like, show that there is ground enough to entertain the best hopes that the divine blessing will attend the use of means so truly pious and christian. And if, after all, your endeavours should fail, you will have done your duty, and the reward will return to your own bosom. If you never live to see the effect, yet the seed sown in early life, may spring up after many days, in a time of affliction perhaps, when all probable appearances have vanished. Those who, for years, have been warned to no purpose, may bethink themselves afterward, when the heavy hand of God is upon them, how earnestly their pious Fathers or their pious Mothers laboured for the good of their souls; and what an ungrateful return they made for all the kindness both of God and of their Parents. And the turning

of such souls to God, in their latter days, has taken place to good purpose, in various instances.

In this life the benefit of early instruction is apparent. Some indeed are so thoughtless, so stubborn, and perverse, that every advantage seems lost upon them; and one scarce knows how to suppose they could have been worse, if even no pains whatever had been taken with them. But in general, it is otherwise. In a course of good discipline, habits of the best kind are formed: the voice of conscience is kept alive; and religion is not despised and trampled under foot. Prudence, decency, industry, and social virtues generally flourish among those who are well-educated: And hence, though many children of pious persons are far from being truly converted to God;—for to turn the heart to the love of Him is not to be effected by the mere force of discipline, or the best habits: It is of grace alone;—yet an attentive observer may remark that the children of such persons are usually, at least, people of good or blameless morals, and often useful members or even ornaments of human society.

How different is the case with the ill-educated, experience abundantly shows. Indulgent parents who have taken a pride in externally decking and adorning their children, and in introducing them into company of various sorts; and who have gratified them in all their fancies, and suffered them to take their own course, and left their minds unfurnished, and never inured them to labour, may frequently read their own sin in the punishment which has attended it. These children are proud, idle, worthless, impudent, extravagant, and head-

strong. They despise you, they treat you with contempt; and the more indiscreetly fond you have been of them, the less do they regard you. Indeed they cannot bear to be controuled in any part of their conduct, and particularly in any article of expense. Nobody will deny that, in regard to many, this is a true representation: Nobody can deny the fact: We all see and lament the dismal prospect which seems to be opening upon the rising generation. But there still remains a question, which parents ought to put to their own consciences most seriously and without evasion:—"The conduct of our children, it is true, is afflicting to us beyond measure or description; but are not we ourselves in a very high degree accountable for their evil habits and evil practices?" Now if conscience do its duty, the answer, I fear, must, in many instances, be, "Yes, you are accountable: you would not take the trouble to watch over and instruct your rash, incautious, inexperienced offspring: you would not exert your parental authority over them: To you it appeared a very cruel thing to correct them." So you have left them to be corrected by their own wickedness, and its consequences, in the course of God's Providence; and you yourselves feel the smart of bitter reflections. All humane persons pity you exceedingly, but cannot help you. May you hence learn your own sin against God in neglecting their education; and may others take warning from you to discipline their children!

How things are with the dregs of the poor, is but too plain. The children of abandoned, unprincipled parents, naturally learn and follow every evil! and

humanly speaking, there seems no hope for them, except by the friendly aid of charity-schools, or of similar institutions: The benefit of which is so great; and the meanness of refusing to encourage and assist them, in those who have it in their power, is so very culpable, that I cannot repent of the severity with which I have this day treated those who are guilty in these respects. I wish they may tremble at the thoughts of death and judgment; and learn and feel at length that they are accountable to God for the use they make of riches.

Lastly: Having now seriously exhorted you to imitate Abraham in commanding your household to keep the way of the Lord, I must very briefly intreat you to consider, before all things, whether you are keeping it yourselves. If you pity not your own souls, you will not pity, you cannot be expected to pity, those of your fellow-creatures, not even the souls of your own children. No man will, to any great purpose, discharge this duty, who neglects his own soul. See its value; consider that Christ died for it; repent, and believe the Gospel.

SERMON XVI.

THE LIFE OF FAITH.

Habakkuk, ii. 3, 4.

For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

If we be enabled to see the full force of these words, and to taste the real goodness of the Lord, as he has been pleased to discover himself in this passage, we shall find no portion of the sacred Scriptures more comfortable or instructive. It is three times made use of in the New Testament. Only may the Lord, whose word it is, open it unto us in its beauty and power, and teach us the true use and exercise of that faith by which the just shall live!

We are by nature in a state of death. With man, since the fall, all is darkness and disorder. It is by faith in the Redeemer that he lives, and is restored to the true life of God in "the inward man*," and to the profitable and comfortable exercise of all the faculties which God hath given him. Light and wisdom, health and peace, joy and strength, take

* Rom. vii. 22. I delight in the law of God after the inward man.

possession of his soul, as soon as it is engrafted into Christ. It mounts upward to God in faith; and, no longer stopping short at earthly things, with a keen and eager eye surveys a large prospect of the unmeasurable riches of a happy eternity. We will,

1st, Endeavour to throw all the light upon our subject, that is to be learnt from the Book of Habakkuk: We will then call to our aid those passages of the New Testament in which the Text is quoted: And, after having collected all the instruction and authority of Scripture that we are able, we would, lastly, attempt, under several suitable heads of application, to make such useful reflections, in the way of advice, admonition and exhortation, as may naturally arise from the information we shall have obtained.

Habakkuk begins his prophecy with complaining, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou will not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save!" He is not the only righteous man, whose faith, hope, and patience have been weakened by the view of the prosperity of the wicked, and the afflictions of the godly. Asaph's sore trial on the same head you may read in Psalm lxxiii. But the Lord, who means at length to bring those that love him to complete eternal bliss, generally suffers their faith to be much tried in the course of their spiritual warfare. He knows what is fittest for himself to do; and what is best for his people to bear: He loves them no less on account of the trials which he sees it fit that they should undergo: At length, they shall see how all things work together for their good*."

* Rom. viii. 28.

The Lord answers Habakkuk's prayers, by a declaration of the vengeance soon to be inflicted on his wicked countrymen the Jews, by the Chaldeans. This contents not Habakkuk. He now complains that "the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he!" The Chaldeans are worse than the Jews! "Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?" After this second complaint, he says, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved*." Though there is a blamable mixture of impatience and unbelief in his general conduct, nevertheless here he deserves to be imitated. He does not, after praying, forget the subject of his petition, as if he trifled with God, like too many. He composes himself to wait for an answer, as a guard that keeps watch on a tower. The Lord does answer him, bidding him write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that "he may run that readeth it." And accordingly there follows a plain denunciation of divine vengeance to be inflicted on the Chaldeans also, which takes up the greatest part of the second chapter. But it required strong faith to believe that this proud, warlike, successful people would ever be brought to ruin, and the poor distressed people of God be delivered from their hands. Therefore it behoved Habakkuk not to be staggered by difficulties or improbabilities, but to believe what he heard from God, who cannot lie. Neither should he be impatient: but consider that "the vision," that is, the subject of the prophecy, "is yet for an appointed

* Habak. ii. 1.

time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: Though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry." What I have threatened concerning the Chaldeans shall be accomplished. Wait in patience. Thou shalt find it so. "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." Faith is in its nature a humble thing; the very contrary to pride. Thou must submit to the word of God. Let not any thing of man, his righteousness, his counsel, or his strength be taken into the account. That is the work of vain pride; such a heart is not right with me. Wouldst thou be comforted indeed, believe my word. Be humble like a little child: and looking OUT of thyself to me, behold me the Almighty, the living and true God, and stagger not at my promises. Refrain thyself and keep thy soul low. Do not exercise thyself in great matters, which are too high for thee: Let thy soul be as a weaned child, and trust in the Lord at all times.

Such is the life of faith recommended by God to his Prophet, as precisely suitable to the particular trial of his mind, spoken of in his first and second chapters. But, as a medicine, however valuable in itself, will not answer a valuable end unless constantly applied, as circumstances require; so Habakkuk, like other holy men, would find perpetual occasion to apply the same remedy. Therefore the particularity of the expression, "live by faith," should be attended to. In truth, we are naturally in a state of death. By the Redeemer a title to life was obtained for Habakkuk and all believers, whether they lived before or after our Lord's appearance on earth. This life, which he bought for them

with his blood, is essentially a happy and a holy life: And the blessed happiness and holiness, which belong to it, are begun here; grow and advance in degree; and after death are completed, and continue through eternity. By faith it is received and enjoyed all along. Neglect the use and exercise of faith in the promises, and do what you please besides, with a view to cure the raging distemper of human misery, and you do nothing to the purpose. So long as we are exposed to corruption and temptation in this imperfect state, so long the best have need to live by faith. For even when the Holy Ghost convinces a man of the extensive purity and the strict severity of the law of God, and applies the condemning power of the commandments to his conscience, it will often happen that internal principles of sin, which before were dormant, will now show themselves impatient of restraint; and break out in perverse workings, and rebellious exertions; and thus the recovery of spiritual joy and health, though begun in the soul, will be impeded. So St. Paul, in the 7th chapter to the Romans, bitterly* laments his evil nature, which was capable of being irritated, by "that which was good," to discover still greater strength of sin and greater depths of malignity. Here is then the grand "secret of the Lord," which is with them that fear him. It is the life of faith, which conveys out of Christ's fulness that astonishing power, wisdom, and virtue to the soul; that victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil; that peace, joy, and love; and that heaven on earth, of which the firmest believer has the first enjoyment; but of which every believer

* See Rom. vii. 8, to the end of the chapter.

has a measure. This will issue at length in a complete restoration of the health of the soul. As to unbelievers, they may think all is well with them. No small part of their misery lies in this their want of feeling. But the curse of sin is consuming them; and if they die thus, their worm will not die, neither will their fire be quenched.

How clearly then is the remedy of human misery set forth to us even in the Old Testament; "the just shall live by faith." You are guilty, blind, miserable, corrupt; what is to be done? How shall you be happy? A Saviour, a Physician of the soul is set forth; but how shall I prevail on him to assist and deliver me? The answer is, Believe in him: Receive him in all his offices. Lost in your own view, depend on him for recovery. What you look for at his hands, you shall obtain: You shall have pardon, wisdom, the peace of God, strength against sin, true joy, and every thing that deserves the name of GOOD. O Christianity! How glorious are thine offers! How little art thou understood or regarded in the world! Did we know thee better, did we feel the malady of our nature, and did we apply the medicine, what a paradise would even this corrupt world become! What prospects of a happy eternity would gladden the hearts of thousands! But few believe,—and therefore few are holy and happy.

Now the grand object of this faith is the Lord Jesus Christ, as the satisfier of the Divine Law for man and the procurer of bliss to their souls from his reconciled Father. In the New Testament he is set forth as already come, and as having completed his work; in the Old he is only promised. Therefore, on this, as well as other accounts, the

life of faith begins to be more clearly set forth in the former than in the latter. Hearken to St. Paul, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith." Rom. i. 16, 17. The word Gospel signifies good news. The news is of a Saviour. No other can be called good news to sinners. The Saviour becomes yours by believing, and is continued yours in the same way: we set him forth to you, praying you to accept him; and as ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God*.

Our Text is quoted also in Gal. iii. 11. "That no man is justified by the law is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Living by faith, then, is a state of dependance on Jesus as a free Saviour, without any dependance on ourselves. We renounce the best of our performances as a ground of hope. Christ's offering is our whole redemption from the curse; and when we are brought to this, we become real Christians; and when we have learnt to put no trust at all in our works, we become enabled, through the assistance of an invisible Saviour, to live a holy life, and to do good works indeed, and not before.

But this life of faith requires the exercise of much patience. Observe then the third place where our

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

Text is quoted, Heb. x. In the latter end of this chapter, the Apostle observes the happy effect which the assurance of faith had on the minds of the believing Hebrews. "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves,—the expression is remarkable,—that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." Yet, because they were still liable to much suffering in this state, and it might please God to permit them to be long exercised with it, therefore, says he, "ye have need of patience; that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith."

Thus that exercise of faith in Habakkuk, relating to the destruction of the Chaldean tyranny, which required so much patient waiting for, though sure to be accomplished at length, is, in nearly the same words, applied in the epistle to the Hebrews, to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to judge the world. That is the event which is to complete the happiness of the Christian: That is what the Hebrews are exhorted to wait for in patient faith: And, by faith in this Lord, and in full dependance on the word of his grace, that he would come at length to deliver them gloriously, completely, and everlastingly, they were to live, and be fitted for all the services and sufferings to which they should be called in this state of pilgrimage.

We are now then prepared to set forth to you, what a life of faith is. He who lives it indeed, becomes JUST, or justified by faith. It is in the merit of the Lord Jesus alone that he is justified, and glories, and has full acceptance with God. As

to himself, he is a wretched sinner and under a curse, being a child of wrath by nature, even as others. As he is divorced from his own righteousness, and submits to the righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ, so also he ceases from his own wisdom. He does good actions; for good works are the fruit which he naturally produces since he was grafted into Christ; but he TRUSTS not in them at all for acceptance with God. He deliberates and ponders on his ways; but he TRUSTS only in the Lord, who directeth his steps, for a happy issue in all his affairs. In himself he is blind as well as guilty; and Christ is his wisdom as well as righteousness. His happiness is that better and enduring substance laid up in heaven, bought for him at the price of the blood of his Redeemer; and to this happiness he received a sure title, as soon as he received him for his Saviour.

As he expects no great comfort here upon earth; and as the world, the flesh, and the devil are against him, he is obliged to exercise patience, till the coming of his Lord to take him, soul and body, into this state of perfect happiness. Though here he is burdened with various evils, and though often by reason of the voice of his groaning his bones cleave to his skin*, still he waits in patient hope: for it is his triumph and boast that his future bliss is of a perfect and enduring nature; sure also and certain; dependant on the grace of God in Christ; a bliss, —for the obtaining of which the promise and the oath of God are engaged.

It is not any thing of a worldly nature that he expects to make him happy. Worldly things are

* See Psalm cii. 5.

unsatisfying at best; and this world itself, with the works thereof, will one day be burnt up. Nor does he seek the favour of God by his own worthiness. Those, who do so, may now, in much ignorance, boast of their works, and fancy they will be as admirable in the sight of God as they are in their own. The Believer knows that a day is coming when "all the proud shall be as stubble," and when "depart, ye cursed," will be the dreadful sound in the ears of all who build their hopes of acceptance on any foundation but Jesus Christ alone. The Believer knows also that, as to himself, he has not one work to plead before God; for sin mixes with all he does. Nevertheless his crown of glory is sure, because the righteousness on which he builds is completed; for he has obtained precious faith in the righteousness of his God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. As therefore, the future bliss, which he looks for is perfect, certain, and everlasting, well may he wait for it patiently; because, as the Text says, "it will surely come, it will not tarry." And what great matter is it to wait for an eternal happiness, during a few years, it may be, of affliction and trouble.

The great hinderance of patience is pride. Therefore "his soul, which is lifted up, is not upright in him; but the just shall live by faith," which gives all the praise to the Saviour. The man himself is humbled, as a sinner deserving no mercy. Thankfully does he accept the inexpressible kindness of his Saviour; and being thus disposed, why should he deem it any great hardship to wait patiently some little time for the accomplishment of the promises! Moreover, it pleases the Lord, to favour him, during

the interval of his spiritual warfare on earth, with frequent consolations,—earnests of the happiness to be hereafter enjoyed,—and always to uphold him with his support. But this also, it must ever be remembered, enters into the idea of the life of faith, namely, that heavenly things themselves are what he aims at, and the happy end he has in view. Thence he is animated to run the ways of patience and of holiness which lead to it.

On Christ he leans, as his all, every step of the road; for so far he lives a life of faith, and no farther. It is a great thing, to live as seeing the God man, trusting in, and loving him, above all things. Those that think faith in Christ easy to be acquired, show they know not what it is, nor what Christ is, nor what they themselves are. To believe in Christ is the rarest and the highest attainment of man. He, who does so, lives by a dependance on a power out of himself, and loves God and his neighbour as himself. Yet not he, "but Christ liveth in him." Divine grace can bring us to this life, the sweetest life of any on earth; and they that seek it shall find it, as well as the eternal life in heaven.

Thus, if justifying faith be considered in its nature and exercise, it includes, involves, or is connected with, every grace and virtue you can conceive. We have seen in it humility, patience, thankfulness, love, wisdom, spiritual mortification, heavenly-mindedness. The just man, living by faith, lives as man ought to do: And none but he lives comfortably, wisely, or safely.

1. Where then, O men of this world, whose portion is in this life, where is your wisdom, what is your employment, what is the great concern that

interests your affections? I will not spend time in telling you, what you will own to be true, that neither riches nor pleasure can make you happy. Your poor souls are covered with all the evils of the FALL, and one door of escape, one house of healing and refuge, one Physician only is there for you. This Lord Jesus Christ calls on you to come to him, and he will restore you to a divine life. Come and put your trust under the shadow of his wings. This life of faith has present pleasures. It has actual enjoyments often; and it has always the certain hope of future glory. Do not linger because you are not yet fit. You will never possess any good qualities, pleasing in the view of God and his Christ, till you believe in him.

2. O ye mourning penitents, who are weary of the bondage of sin; and who find, by bitter experience, that ye cannot speak peace to yourselves by all the duties in which ye labour, set yourselves seriously to learn the life of faith in Jesus. Say, "Why art thou so cast down, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Put thy trust in God; for I will yet give him thanks, who is the help of my countenance and my God." I have the word of his grace in Jesus to rely on. I will "say unto the Lord, thou art my hope, and my strong hold, my God, in him will I trust." What I see not, he will show and teach me. Let me only be patiently stayed on him. He delighteth in mercy so much, that his only Son died for me when I was an enemy to him. The blood of Christ can cleanse from all sin. Grace abounds much more than sin hath abounded. This is the true God and eternal life. He rejects not me, but gives me as good a warrant

to make use of him as a Saviour, as any other poor sinner that applies to him. Let me not then refuse the proffered mercies of a gracious God; and while I plead nothing but the blood of Christ for my redemption at the throne of grace, let me wait in patient, yet firm expectation, that I shall one day join the happy number of those who cry, "thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood."

Confirmed believers,—you see that by faith it is you live. Be moderate in your desires and expectations in this world. If you look for perfect bliss here, you look for it in vain. While you live here you must carry the Cross daily, and deny yourselves, and follow Jesus Christ. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." If you see the triumphing of the wicked, and the oppression of the righteous, remember the time of both is short. Take heed of disgracing the best of causes by murmuring against God, by envying, or by recompensing evil for evil. These things are expressly forbidden in Scripture. Patience and prayer are the duties to which you are called; and good for evil is the return to be made by you for oppression and injustice. You will have time enough, in a happy eternity, to triumph and rejoice; whereas "the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment."

SERMON XVII.

THE CHARACTER OF SAUL.

1 Sam. xv. 30.

Then he said, I have sinned; yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord thy God.

SAUL, the first king of Israel, speaks these words. Before the affair of Amalek, stated in this chapter, he had given but too plain evidences of a heart not right with God. He was no idolater, but a constant worshipper of the true God, in form at least, all his days. He appears to have had always some idea of serving God; but then it must be in his own way, by his own will, and in dependance only on his own judgment. Thus, for instance, when he was directed to wait for the prophet seven days, he chose to sacrifice at his own discretion, rather than exercise faith and patience a little longer.

But not to dwell on former scenes, the chapter before us lets us into his true character very completely. He received a positive direction to destroy Amalek and all their possessions. I shall not spend time in vindicating the severity of the command. God knows how to punish sin in his creatures; and they, who think the case of Amalek

hard, will doubtless think the case of sinners being sent to hell still harder: Nor will the same persons, probably, see, that, in the sufferings of the innocent Jesus, mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other*. But "let God be true, and every man a liar." To measure him, by our short line, is one of the evils of which Saul was guilty; and it is an unreasonable pride, which, however it may tempt and harass, can find no abiding place in the heart of any truly humble person.

Saul performed the commission with great partiality. What he approved of in it, he did; what did not suit with his reason, he left undone. He destroyed the Amalekites, but he spared the best of the sheep and oxen. It appeared to him an unreasonable thing to waste so much property. The command of God is sufficient reason to an humble soul. A proud man is not content with this. You must satisfy him with reasons, or he will not obey. Saul, it seems, did not think he had done much, if any thing, amiss. He boasts, before Samuel, how well he had done. He insists on it, that he had obeyed. He enlarges on circumstances which made something in his favour: and what was not quite right, he thinks might well be excused, by his laying the blame of it on the people, and because of the very pious end of the disobedience,—"to sacrifice to the Lord thy God in Gilgal." Samuel shows him what a poor thing sacrifice is compared with obedience; and that though he HAD destroyed the witches out of Israel, as his story tells us, his "rebellion was as the sin of witchcraft;" and

* Psalm lxxxv. 10.

that though he did not bow down to idols, his "stubborness was as idolatry."

The self-will of a proud heart, which is determined to have its own way, and which will not bend to God, though varnished with the forms of true religion, and clear of gross idolatry, ranks a man, on the same level, with an open worshipper of idols. How slightly does this proud man confess his guilt, after having defended himself as long as he could with cavils and excuses! In the Text, he owns he had sinned, but he adds, "Yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord." The prophet, who had a strong affection for Saul, and mourned for him deeply before God, complies; but he cannot reverse the righteous sentence, which takes from him the kingdom of Israel. And how little reason is there to hope, that Saul will repent, while he is far more concerned for his own honour and character, than on account of his sin. He saw what a disgraceful thing it would be in the eyes of the great men, and of his subjects in general, for the prophet to go away and leave him to sacrifice alone. Samuel must attend him in public; pay him respect and own him; and the king and the prophet must appear together as of the same religion. So, I fear, it is no uncharitable conjecture to support, that this false-hearted formalist, having been seen in public with the prophet, and gone through, with pomp, some forms of prayer and thanksgiving, afterwards forgot his sin, and dismissed the burden of it from his mind. He regarded man more than God, and his own reasonings more than the will

of his Maker. His own corrupt desires he had no idea of mortifying in obedience to the Almighty.

His future conduct, full of pride, obstinacy, and rebellion against God, and ending in the dreadful guilt of self-murder, speaks awfully to the case of Pharisaic formalists, who would be thought men of great virtue, while none are farther from it, and who will scarce ever see themselves sinful in any thing. Saul, in short, seems the very picture of such characters, which are very common in the world! May God give us eyes to see ourselves aright. We can often perceive others to be Pharisees, without seeing ourselves to be so. Yet what is more wholesome than to find out our own evils, while there is time to amend them? In every attempt of this sort I am sensible how disadvantageously we proceed. The heart of man naturally fights against the strongest evidence, when that evidence has a tendency to detect its guilt and wickedness. With our eye, however, on the pattern of Saul, we will endeavour more distinctly to describe, in a few particulars, the workings of a mind like his, showing you how contrary it is to the character of one who is truly humble and sincere. And we may then exhort two sorts of persons in a manner adapted to the subject,

1. A false professor of religion, like Saul, is PARTIAL in his obedience. Some duties he will perform; others he will omit. In doing this he is led by his own will, humour, and what he calls his reason. It is indeed HIS REASON, but not right reason. For the reasoning powers of man, in religion, are corrupted by sin and the fall, as much as the affections and passions. Hence such men will

pick and choose in the Scriptures themselves. Some things they approve, others they cannot endure. That which bears hard on their pride they will not receive. Hence, views of the natural depravity, misery, and ignorance of man, though most wholesome, most humbling, and directly leading us to Christ and salvation, they reject. The doctrines of the Gospel, and the whole work of God's Holy Spirit, they slightly regard. As they are in doctrines, so they are in temper and practice. While they indulge themselves in such reasonings they remain proud and self-willed. They will bear no cross; they will exercise no self-denial for God's sake. They consult what is pleasing and agreeable. By this they measure doctrines, practice, and every thing, in which they are concerned. Cheap duties and services, which cost them nothing, they will practise: Difficult, burdensome duties, which would cause trouble to them, or expose them to reproach, they disregard. Whatever happen to be the fashionable virtues they will follow: What is not agreeable to the manners of the times they live in, they hate; and no precepts of God, however expressly declared, can move them to it. Yet they have a world of reasons and arguments to support their disobedience. The grand source of all their argument, the very hinge on which all their opposition turns,—a rebellious heart itself,—this they neither see nor suspect.

Now, Brethren, consider. Is YOUR obedience thus partial? Are there some sins in which you live continually; some duties which you continually neglect? Do not think your discharge of these will excuse your omission of other duties. You

show, by this conduct, the hatred of your heart, against the will of God, and your want of sincerity. A true child of God obeys ALL the commands of God. If he sins, he grieves and repents, and rises again. He cannot allow himself in any sin whatever. This is the essential difference between him and you. Cost what it may he contends against, he combats, all sin: He makes no compromise with it: He hates it with perfect hatred, and is seriously seeking its universal destruction. May God help us to apply this contrast aright.—I now proceed to another instance.

2. A false professor of religion never confesses sin heartily. He does not see the evil of it. His eye is never on his own heart as wicked; he will always defend himself as meaning well, and as right in his intentions, even where his actions will bear no argument to vindicate them. And self-love is so strong a principle, that it is no wonder, that a man blind to himself, and by the love of sin entirely prejudiced in his judgment, should always have something to say in his own vindication. Hear him represent his own cause, and you can scarcely find any thing wrong, even in those transactions where you are sure there must be great blame. It was in compliance with the prejudices of the people; it was to sacrifice to the Lord. He is sure he was very zealous to obey the will of God; if he erred, it was a mistake of judgment. His motives were honest, and even devout.

This is the way of such men: You can never find a single fact which they will trace up to the bitter root of original sin, and own to have proceeded from a heart really and strongly depraved. "Be-

hold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me." So speaks that neighbour of Saul *, "who was better than he," to whom the Lord gave his kingdom. In what sense was he better than Saul? Not in this, that he was more clear of evident and foul transgressions. For, surely, murder and adultery are as gross crimes as man can well commit. But the difference lay here: If Saul had fallen into the same evils, he would have had a hundred things to say in his defence: not entirely to take away, but to lessen his guilt. Samuel taxes Saul; Nathan taxes David. The first of these kings has much to say for himself; pleads largely his obedience, and very faintly owns his sin at last, when he cannot wholly clear himself. The latter yields wholly, "I have sinned against the Lord," is struck dumb with conscious guilt, and owns it sincerely; "he acknowledges his transgression, and his sin is ever before him."

It is not easy to conceive, how men, who see not the natural evil of the heart, can sincerely confess any sin. In fact it is found, that such persons are always slight and faint in their confessions: They confess in form and ceremony, in a general way; but they still keep up the good opinion of their own heart. Of such great consequence, Brethren, it is, that we learn with St. Paul to say, "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." He who has learnt this, may fall indeed through the power of temptation; for no mere man is above the possibility of this; but sin is not his element: He sees it distinctly, as it is in the heart, he hates, loathes, confesses, forsakes it altogether. He can

* 1 Sam. xv. 28.

not remain, as a false professor of Christianity can, in the habit and practice of sin. That is the way of those who see not the evil of sin, and of their own sinful nature. And hence, those who, in words, admit original sin, without feeling it, or who deny it altogether, deal largely in actual sin; because they are destitute of that humility, which, through grace, is the proper check and restraint of it.

Brethren, will you be proud with Saul, or humble with David? The difference is no slight matter. You often hear, in this house, the sentence repeated; "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." For it is in this entire and sincere confession of guilt, without excuse or apology, it is in this acknowledging of the wickedness of the heart itself, that a broken and contrite spirit, which God despiseth not, appears. Such shall rejoice in God's free mercy by Christ Jesus. It suits them. Salvation by grace they need, and it is precious to them; the worth of Christ is not known but to such a soul. Finally, such shall have peace through his blood, and shall serve God with love and delight: They are well fitted to join the song of his redeemed above. But one who confesses, like Saul, is no confessor at all in God's sight: He is not humbled; he can neither receive pardoning mercy, nor sanctifying grace.

I leave then this weighty matter with your consciences, Brethren. If sin remains unrepented of; is faintly confessed, and never forsaken: and if you still allow yourselves in excuses, and clear your

hearts as sincere and good, in the main, know for a certainty you are Pharisaic formalists; and if you remain so, all the white-wash of moral decencies and of external works can never purify you in the sight of God. It is fit that a fallen sinner should know himself to be such, and not boast of Christ being his Saviour, while he feels not his need of him.

This subject, however, suggests abundant consolation to truly penitent souls. Thou who canst not forgive thyself for thy great wickedness, but abhorrest it as the issue of a wicked heart,—thou art the man whom God will exalt in Christ Jesus. For the whole is expressed in our Saviour's favourite maxim, "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

3. Of a piece with all this, is a THIRD mark of a false professor of religion,—that he hides, even from his own eyes, the wickedness of his heart by a multitude of formalities. This was the case of Saul, all his days. He worshipped Jehovah; he suppressed witchcraft; he fought the Lord's battles against the Philistines; he discouraged all gross idolatry; he supported a decent show of religious forms; he reverenced the Lord's prophets; and he treated the law of Moses with decent respect. Can it be possible, some may think, that a man, so courageous in the cause of the Lord, so zealous for religion, so decorous in his deportment, and so apparently devout, could be in his heart an enemy of God? It is very possible, Brethren; for, if he had not been so, I believe it impossible that he should have been forsaken of God at last, and left to despair and self-murder. What man ever called forth more visible tokens of divine displeasure? It is true,

he grew worse and worse;—the way of evil is of that sort: Sin, as it proceeds along, gathers in its course, and the little ball becomes a mountain. But there is no evidence that this man EVER loved God sincerely. And those, who like him, take up a profession of serving God when their heart is not in the work, will, in their course, be likely to meet with temptations, that will make them worse and worse. Such persons deceive themselves with forms all along; for there is a way of attending even means of grace that hardens and deceives the depraved heart of man. I am fearful of speaking of it, lest I should appear inconsistent with what I have formerly observed,—namely,—that there are too many professors of godliness, who are very far from being so attentive and assiduous in the use of public means as they ought to be. They let little things hinder them, and do not order their affairs so as to find that time to serve God, which undoubtedly they would do, if they were more zealous for growth in grace. The thinness of many congregations is a proof of this. But, on the other hand, a person may so misuse the external means of grace, as, in effect, to convert them into a destructive poison. A man does this when he depends on these means for peace of conscience and salvation, and puts them in the room of Christian faith and love. Saul had this fault all his days. It formed no part of his case to confess, to loathe, to forsake, sin; but if he could persuade Samuel to turn with him, so that he might worship the Lord, this, he thinks will heal all that is amiss. In his own opinion, indeed, there is not much amiss either in his conduct or his disposition. Though he cannot clear himself wholly,

yet,--surely,—the discharge of such and such duties will make amends for all.

At this day false professors of religion act in the same manner. If they do but hear the preaching of some favourite Clergyman, if they do but receive the sacrament at stated times, these attentions and performances, it is supposed, will set all right between God and themselves. Thus, by forms, do miserable men hide from their own eyes their abominations, and add to their guilt the enormous evil of self-righteousness. I beseech persons of this character to weigh well their dangerous condition and to repent. The true Christian's views are directly opposite to all this. No forms can wash out his stains, or give ease to his conscience. "Nothing but Christ, nothing but Christ;" as one of the Martyrs said, when going to the flames. He uses the means of grace carefully; but it is to find Christ in them. This is the HYSSOP with which he wishes to be purged. He glorifies the Lord Jesus;—he willingly complies with God's method of treating sinners; and the Lord comforts and raises him up, in his own way.

4. I have another plain mark to mention. A hypocritical professor of religion, being far more solicitous about the praise of men, than the praise of God, is soon brought to a false peace. He quiets his mind concerning his sins and evils, if he can only contrive to appear well before men. Let Saul only persuade Samuel to honour him, before the great and before Israel, and attend him while worshipping the Lord, and he gains his end. It is so at this day with false-hearted men. Have they sinned and evidently acted an unchristian part? They presently

study how to recover their reputation. If some rich or very reputable professors of godliness will but countenance them; if they can be received into the assemblies of persons of this sort, join with them in the Lord's Supper, and decently go through some offices of religion, their inward trouble of soul is cured. Guilt has in them fixed no deep stings: The fear of God, and the apprehension of his just displeasure, and of the loss of communion with him, in their souls,—these are objects of small concern. If they can contrive to be well received by men, especially men of eminent reputation, they are as easy as if no guilt whatever had been contracted. Thus do they show how worldly their minds are; how atheistically indifferent about the favour and love of God.

It is strikingly different with real Christians. Let their consciences be charged with guilt, and they are covered with shame and confusion. A settled, serious sadness fills their minds. You cannot give them ease by the kindest and the most friendly attentions. They have no anxiety to be thought well of by others in this point; that is, they are not in the smallest degree disposed to extenuate the fault or faults they have committed, or to make any defence of themselves before men. The conscience itself is afflicted; the arrows of the Almighty stick fast in them, and his hand presseth them sore. The light of God's countenance, the restoration of his favour, and the intimations of his pardoning love,—these things they want. And, as nothing but a fresh application of the blood of Christ, by faith, can heal the wounds of conscience,—thoroughly afflicted, as theirs is,—they seek for this. And they smile with

joy, and find a refreshment akin to that of heaven itself, when they are enabled thus to believe, thus to rest satisfied with Christ's atonement, as God himself is satisfied; and thus to find peace.

In this manner the man after God's own heart was affected. He has opened the inmost recesses of his soul in the 51st Psalm. Though he had heard, by a prophet's mouth, that the Lord had pardoned his sin, yet even that does not content him. He prays for the joy of God's Salvation: He prays to be upheld by his free Spirit; to have his lips opened, to show forth God's praise; to be delivered from guiltiness; to be purged with hyssop; to hear of joy and gladness; to have a clean heart and a right spirit. I speak things well known to minds exercised in godliness. You can conceive what deep inroads, into his peace and comfort, the well-known foul transgressions, in the matter of Uriah must have made. Had he been a Saul, he would have been content with OUTWARD prosperity and formal religion. He wants INWARD peace and holiness. For both he prays, through Jesus's blood; and he longs for the refreshing sense of God's loving-kindness, and to walk with him again in that sweet fellowship which he once had known. Whoever joins with him in his prayers heartily, and cannot rest in outward things, shall doubtless join with him in his praises. A mere professor of godliness will be content with forms and shows of religion; either scorning real Communion with God as Enthusiasm; or, at least, very indifferent about it, provided he has a decent reputation in religion, and has worldly things agreeable to his mind.

Thus, by partial obedience; by backwardness to

confess sin; by cloaking sin with forms; and by being more solicitous for the good opinion of men, than for the favour of God, may these false pretenders to religion be detected. And, I hope, matter has also been suggested for the consolation of sincere spirits, under the consciousness of their evils, since they are willing to part with all sin; to confess wholly; and neither to deceive others nor themselves with forms.

Brethren, keep up this sincerity; watch against the admission of self-righteousness and vain-glory. As when God first, by his Spirit, wrought an effectual and saving change in your minds, he made you to feel what a guilty conscience is, in a manner very different from a careless sinner, or a presumptuous Pharisee, so he showed you also the true remedy;—CHRIST JESUS, and his most precious blood shed for your sins. This purged your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Doubtless you have felt the need of being warned over and over to keep from sin. Yet, if you sin, you have this Advocate, and you need him daily. You cannot rest in your conscience but by daily coming to God through him. The honour of the world, and the opinion others have of you, weigh not with you in satisfying your conscience. This is right. Walk thus to the end, humbly, cautiously; doing every thing, in religion, between God and your conscience, as if there were not a person in the world beside yourself. Much secret prayer will be both a comfortable evidence, and also an actual improvement of this sincere dealing: Pray, therefore, much in secret, and "your heavenly Father, who seeth in secret, will reward you openly." You

know who said this. It is part of HIS Sermon on the mount. And you shall see him, ere long, with great joy and gladness.

But can YOU abide his face, when he shall come to judgment; you, who, in practice, are children of Saul? What a poor thing, to wear a mask for a little time, and be exposed in your true colours for ever. Deceive not yourselves. It is very difficult to make you see that this is your character. I have done what I could: I have laid open the marks of insincerity, and endeavoured to show you to yourselves. Do you apply this information, do you apply these rules of judging, not to this or that person,—Men who have the greatest reason to look at home, are very ready to do this,—But do you apply them to yourselves.

Tremble at the thoughts of self-deception, and watch over your own conduct and principles, that no root of hypocrisy ruin your religious performances. Cry unto God in the language of an honest and true penitent, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

SERMON XVIII.

THE CHARACTER AND FAITH OF DAVID.

1 Samuel, xxx. 6.

But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

THE children of God may be sorely assaulted and distressed—greatly distressed—from within and without. So holy David appears to have been in the passage before us. But then they are not without hope; they are not driven at random from wave to wave of misery. The helm of divine faith is not lost. They have a cheerful hope, which sweetens the bitterest cup, and renders their situation, when most calamitous, infinitely better than that of the ungodly when most prosperous. David, and men like David, "encourage themselves in the Lord their God," in all seasons of distress. This is a rock too strong for the proudest and most boisterous waves of hell or Satan, or of adversity to shake. How desirable that we all knew it, and were all "founded upon it*."

The most godly are so far from being exempt from afflictions, that they are often exposed to the

* Matth. vii. 25.

severest. And so little suited is prosperity to the spiritual growth of the soul, that even, in very faithfulness to his covenant, the Lord is constrained to afflict his dearest servants, to prevent their ruining themselves. But the godly have the Lord for their God. He is their God in covenant. All shall work together for their good, and all shall end well at last. How light does this thought make present afflictions! But how heavy are they to the ungodly. They cannot look up to God with comfort. Their prospects beyond the grave will not bear a steady contemplation. Whereas the afflicted soul, who knows the Lord, and can in affliction say, "thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory;" such a soul may repose in a storm, and triumph in the severest shocks of adversity.

We will endeavour then, in some measure, to lay open to you, the spirit of the "man who was raised up on high; the anointed and the sweet Psalmist of Israel." And that we may do this with the more effect, it will be proper to advert to the very different situations in which, according to Scripture-history, we find this servant of God was placed. How wonderfully was he supported and encouraged amidst a sea of afflictions! Surely it must be worth while to examine the principles and motives of such a character as this. Both the godly and the ungodly may derive profit from the inquiry. And it is my earnest prayer, that the Holy Ghost may apply the instructive subject to all sorts of persons.

If there be one man's story and character, in the Old Testament, more useful than any other, for our

study and meditation, I should take it to be that of David, king of Israel. He went through the extremes both of prosperity and of adversity. Scarcely any man had experienced more of both. The exercises of his mind and conscience were also strong, various, animated, and very distinct. You see them painted throughout the book of Psalms. We live in the dregs of time, when religious affections are very much despised. But all the religious feelings to which, by God's help, we would lead you, are, in their substance set forth in the Psalms. Not any state of mind is there, in which a man can be, but some one or other of them will afford him matter and language to exercise his soul in a suitable manner. Holy men, in every age have found the Psalms the richest repository of Christian wisdom and piety. And, it is to be feared, that in reading them at Church, many, who call themselves Christians, carelessly repeat, Sunday after Sunday, those very thoughts and feelings which they despise as enthusiastic in those who fear God.

Great was this man, in every light almost that you can conceive. As a Musician, a Poet, a Patriot, a King, his character was extraordinary. We admire the heroes and celebrated names of whom we read in history. Why is not David so admired? His heroism was scarcely ever equalled. I will tell you: Men hate godliness; and therefore this circumstance in the character of David makes his story to be little regarded. Again, some poets, of ancient and modern times, are admitted as prodigies of genius. Men of taste are enraptured with their beauties. Why are David's Psalms regarded so

little in that light? Surely their beauties, as compositions, are wonderful. But there is too much of God in them to suit the taste of carnal minds. Hence they are despised by those who highly relish the classic writers.

Indeed the supreme excellency of David lies in his acquaintance with Jehovah, and the Covenant of his Grace. For it is not any sort of view of God that will avail to the conversion of the heart. A tolerably moralized Pharisee may say, when he is in affliction, he comforts himself in God; because he is honest and has done his duty. But David's spirit is different: and so is that of every Saint. So far from thinking he has done his duty, so far from drawing his comfort from that source, he views himself always as a miserable sinner. Indeed, compared with others, he is righteous; for high is his character drawn by the Holy Ghost, 1 Kings, xv. 5, which I beseech you to attend to; because, I fear, many have imagined this man to have been only a Saint of a lower order. "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him, all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah." What a character is this! But observe, what is here said respects the general tenour of his conduct and practice; in which he excelled, perhaps, all the holy men that ever lived.

Yet all this affords no matter of boasting. His excellencies were not his own; they were the work of the Holy Spirit of God. His nature still was sinful; and he felt it so: He says, "Behold, I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother

conceive me." His atrocious crime in the affair of Uriah, in which for once he was permitted to fall, he traces to this source of innate depravity. If he was an humble man before this, as doubtless he was, after his recovery, through grace, his humility would receive a prodigious increase. If you think that when David "encouraged himself in the Lord his God," his encouragement arose from a view of his own goodness and uprightness, as that which should move God to be his God, you are exceedingly deceived.

Learn, from his own words, the true source of his comforts, amidst a life of much trouble and extreme vexation. He shall speak for himself; and, oh! that Christians in general were acquainted with the same foundation for true consolation. "Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire *." What, though his house and family, and even the inward affairs of his own soul, often caused him much disquietude, and were sometimes enough to drive him almost into desperation; yet God had made with him an everlasting covenant. God was his God in a way of covenant in Jesus, the promised seed, of whom David was a type; and it was on the righteousness, blood, and intercession of this Jesus that he grounded his confidence. Through him he was everlastingly saved: All his sins were pardoned: his person was accepted: his adoption among the children of God, and his reception into heavenly glory were ensured.

* 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

Not one of his affairs was left to his own management. Every trouble and every cross were ordered in infinite kindness and wisdom, in number, weight, and measure, and of very faithfulness for his good. The Covenant was "ordered in all things;" not one excepted; and, to complete the whole, it was made SURE; not left at uncertainties. This was "all his salvation." By faith in this God, who had so covenanted with him in Christ, he lived continually looking to him for all things. To HIM his eye was directed in every difficulty; and he found continual relief. This is "all my desire." His spirit was moulded, by the Holy Ghost, to delight in this covenant. He desired nothing besides for his portion. And though, through various troubles, he found not always that success in his worldly concerns which he could have wished, yet he doubted not but all would terminate well; and that the richest enjoyment of the blessings of the same covenant were reserved for him in heaven. This is the secret of bliss. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant*."

This is the God of the Scriptures, and this the portion of his people. In this faith David conquers the lion and the bear; and afterwards the Philistine giant. Every fresh experience of success animates him for further trials. In this faith how patiently, how sweetly, how nobly, how serenely does he bear the persecuting malice of Saul. Yet he feels trouble as a man. Trouble sends him to prayer. In his Psalms he prays again and again, and the God of

* Psalm xxv. 14.

his covenant hears and relieves him again and again. Even his sins and failings,—for Saints are not without them, though their habitual reigning character be as different from that of the ungodly as heaven is from hell,—I say, even his sins and failings are made profitable to him in the issue. They make him more humble, and more cautious, and more thankful, for the future.

A man of his character lives not by his own strength. He asks counsel of God in every thing: he follows not his own will and way. All this you see in David continually. The trial referred to in the Text was very severe. His family and the family of his servants are carried into captivity, with all their substance. His men speak of stoning him. He was greatly distressed; but he "encourages himself in the Lord his God." He consults God. He receives gracious answers: and his success, in this instance, you will find, was glorious. He, who has such a God, can return good for evil: He can twice spare the life of Saul,—with a generosity that has not its parallel, except in the same spiritual David.

Prosperity is the scene, of all others, the most unfriendly to the life of faith. How David fell in his prosperity you all know. But on his recovery, with what unfeigned humility does he bear the Lord's chastisements! What encouragement does he constantly take from the "covenant ordered in all things, and sure," amidst the sharpest afflictions which followed him afterwards. His sun sets, at length, in glorious brightness; and he is now out of the reach of evil, and enjoys for ever the God of his Covenant.

This history of David; his thus encouraging himself during a series of trials in the Lord his God; the nature of the covenant, which God made with him—all these things were written for our instruction, that we through patience, and comfort of the Scripture, might have hope. A strong foundation of hope is certainly set before us in this example; and I am, therefore, warranted in now proposing it to the godly for their imitation,—to all who have fled for refuge to the same God in covenant; for he it was who was David's strength and refuge.

Did David thus rejoice in God; and encourage himself, in the most pressing difficulties with a view of the Lord his God, who was his God by an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure? And will not you, who are looking to the same God, do the same? Do not imagine, my Brethren, that there was in David, more than in you, any worthiness which could purchase the divine favour. He was indeed an eminent saint; but it is not the eminence of his holiness, much less of his natural great gifts and endowments, which recommended him to the divine protection. To beat down this idea of merit and self-sufficiency is, and should be, one of the most serious and weighty employments of the Christian life. Is not salvation wholly of the Lord? Has he not "mercy because he will have mercy, and compassion because he will have compassion," as he saith to Moses? Is not the true principle of all your holiness this,—to be brought to acquiesce in the divine grace and mercy, purely as such? And is not all boasting to be excluded? And are you not to feel yourselves unworthy of any

favour? Complain as you may of yourselves, you will scarcely exceed David in the complaints which he makes in the Psalms, of his sinfulness, temptations, perplexities, and corruptions.

You see then, that a discouraging view of your own worldly situation is no bar at all to your rejoicing in your God, as David did, and as I am now exhorting you to do. Admit that you are pressed above measure with afflictions; that wave after wave of adversity rises up to trouble you; that when one cross is over, another succeeds; that all is dark and unsettled; and that you meet, in your family and worldly affairs, with continual disappointments. You may still encourage yourselves in your God.—But, perhaps, the light of his countenance is withdrawn, and you walk in darkness; perhaps through a consciousness of much unfaithfulness you are bowed down and discouraged, and for want of refreshing views of Christ and his salvation, you feel yourselves prone to seek salvation, henceforward, rather by the works of the law, than by the faith of Christ. You used to rejoice in Christ as your Husband*, Comforter, Mediator, Righteousness, and portion; but now, though you cry and complain unto your God, he answers not. You look around for comfort; but find none. You see, —what I fear is too much the case at present,— that even the people of God are not lively as in times past; and that very few can give you any suitable directions, on account of the sloth and languor in religion that too generally prevails; and that through the dimness of their sight in divine things,

* 2 Cor. xi. 2.

they are rather likely to discourage and distract, than to help and encourage you. Are these things so?—Still,

In such situations how good and refreshing is it to look to a God in covenant. When the streams are every where dry, go to the fountain head. Who was it that chose you, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that you should be holy? David's God. And has he not "made with you an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure?" Is not the whole sealed and ratified by the blood of Jesus? The ever Blessed Trinity is engaged. The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are all engaged, in their several offices, to perform their parts of the covenant. And it is "ordered in all things, and sure." A universal, decisive Providence directs all your concerns: You need not then be discouraged; though all seems to you at present to be darkness and confusion. Things are not left to your management. It is good for you "to hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." I am now speaking to them who love God; and not to them who do not. And observe, "All things are said to work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." He foreknew you, he predestinated you to be conformed to the image of his Son. He gave you to Christ as your Shepherd; and of "all that the Father hath given him, he will lose nothing, but raise it up at the last day." "It is God that justifieth you, who is he that condemneth; it is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again."

Recollect then these strong consolations of your

God! the Divine Three all engaged in covenant; the blood of Jesus, and the oath and promise of the Lord; the doctrine of justification before God, "only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings*;" the offices of Christ as Priest, King, and Prophet: And to these consolations add, that Almighty power, wisdom, and goodness are also engaged to direct every one of your concerns, to make all things work together for your good, and never to leave nor forsake you; for, he who began a good work in you, authorizes you to be confident of this very thing, that he will "perform it to the day of Jesus Christ."—Surely, Brethren, when these things are put together and kept in view, here is a solid ground, amidst all the dejections which you feel, for your "encouraging yourself in the Lord your God." You are evidently called on to follow that divine admonition: "In returning and in rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." That triumphant declaration of the Apostle is also yours. Take it up in faith. "If God be for us, who shall be against us?" Here you have the true resting place of the soul, amidst the storms of life; and the sweet and certain hope, beyond the grave, of an unclouded, endless enjoyment of your God.

The people of God may not always understand one another's terms, yet, they agree in this, that they are altogether fixed on God as their only peace and happiness. If then you would abundantly "en-

* See Art. X. of the Church of England; and Galat. ii. 16. and iii. 11.

courage yourself in your God;" if you would experience in your consciences a solid and lasting refuge against guilt, and care, and fear; and if you would be favoured with deliverance from your spiritual enemies, to serve the living God, "without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of your life," study the covenant of grace; pray over it, as it is described in Scripture; meditate day and night upon it, and upon the character of the God whose covenant it is; that your hearts may be comforted and stablished in every good word and work. Seek, for instance, to realize that precious passage of St. Paul*; "We are bound to give thanks alway to God, for you, Brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Truly, if you be called to suffer deeply both in outward affairs, and also in concerns of the soul, you will find such strong consolation, as that which I have suggested, to be your only resource and support. Though your outward man should perish, your inward man will be renewed day by day†. Only, I beseech you, regard not any unbelieving suggestions of your minds, as if all this comfort would lead you to carelessness of living. Trust in God, and cleave stedfastly unto him; and he will not permit any iniquity to have the dominion over you. For surely as you believe, so it will be done unto you. And when you are brought to believe that

* 2 Thess. ii. 13. 14. † 2 Cor. iv. 16.

God's covenant of grace can make and keep you holy to the end, through faith, you will find it will be so. "Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass*." It is this committing of our way unto the Lord, this trusting in him for every good thing,—for peace of conscience and sanctification here, and for eternal life hereafter, that distinguishes a true and lively faith from a dead and speculative one. Happy then is the lot of all the real children of God! Abundant relief is provided for them, from all the troubles of this life; and, in a little time, everlasting rest.

I add here one short, but decisive mark of distinction, by which you may know whether you do love God. I take it from that expression of David in his account of the covenant; "for this is all my salvation and all my desire." Do you feel habitually, that you do not cherish a wish or hope, for any thing temporal or spiritual, but what is included in the covenant of God, and in the offices of Jesus, as Prophet, Priest, and King? Certainly this is the breathing of every godly soul. 'Oh! give me according to THAT covenant. In every event let me be found under THIS covenant.' "It is all my salvation and all my desire."—'I am contented in this life, and shall be happy in the next.' Blessed soul! thou art, this day, invited, and may the Lord effectually work it in thee, be thy trials what they may, to "encourage thyself in the Lord thy God."

But, a very few words, in conclusion, to the wicked. And under that description, I mean not only drunkards, sabbath-breakers, swearers, openly

* Psalm xxxvii. 5.

profane and debauched libertines,—such persons are notoriously vicious, and of their state before God there can be no question;—but I mean every man in this house, whose conscience should tell him, if it spoke with power as it ought to do, that the God of David, that is, God in covenant, is not all his salvation, is not all his desire. Let all who place their happiness in money, and are not rich towards God; who are cold to heavenly things, and given up in heart to the world; who have never felt themselves vile sinners, and who hope to be saved by what they call their sincerity, and not by the covenant of grace in Jesus altogether—Oh! let them repent. The free salvation of a gracious God is not yours while you continue thus. You feel not your need of it. It is not your desire. Your desires are all of another kind. When trouble comes, you cannot encourage yourselves, as David does, with a God who has made a covenant with you. And what will you do when death and judgment come? To-day then, while it is called to-day, return speedily to God, in the Gospel way of repentance and faith, so often recommended to you. Lay hold upon his covenant promises, in Christ Jesus, that you may find him "a very present help in time of trouble."

SERMON XIX.

ST. PAUL'S EXPERIENCE IN THE SCHOOL OF CHRIST.

Philip. iii. 12.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

It is always an advantage, in affairs of moment and difficulty, to have an example before us which we may safely follow. Christians have therefore an unspeakable advantage in the perfect example of the Son of God. But the examples of eminent saints, in Scripture, are, also, not without their use. And in all the New Testament there is none that can be so useful as that of St. Paul. Besides other reasons which make it so, we know more of him than we do of all the other apostles, eminent in godliness as they all doubtless were. He explains to us his inward life and experience in religion, in various parts of his writings, and particularly in the chapter of the Text.

He shows how he might have trusted and gloried in his own righteousness, as much or more than any man, if it had been proper and safe so to do. You will find him in this chapter enumerating his advantages; and, among the rest, this, which in our times men are very apt to boast of; that he was, "touch-

ing the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." He here means that excellent and amiable thing which we commonly call good morality. But what then? Did he desire to be found resting in that for his Salvation, when he should appear before God? Through the grace of God he knew that he was a sinner and laden with guilt upon guilt, which was not to be cleansed by the discharge of any outward duties whatever. Therefore he scruples not, in this light, to count all these "things but dung, that he might win Christ, and be found in him."

Brethren, we need to be thus stripped of self-righteousness, made inwardly humble, and brought to Christ alone for salvation. At the same time we shall feel that our obligations to obedience are not, in the smallest degree, relaxed. Indeed we CANNOT practise true obedience till we learn from Christ to call ourselves unprofitable servants, and to look to him for righteousness* and for strength, that we may be accepted in the Beloved, and attain at last the happy resurrection of the dead. This is the Christian article of justification by faith, so strongly described and exemplified by St. Paul. Oh! may we all follow HIM in his faith and patience. Many who profess to be religious, neither seem to feel their own unworthiness, nor the excellency of Christ. They are far from having attained the simplicity and purity of Christian faith. Indeed the whole divine life is so contrary to nature, that it requires constant influence from above to maintain it. And the best proficients in it, are far from being so complete as they wish. I have no idea of any

* Rom. x. 4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

mere man being superior to St. Paul, in the divine life, in that or in any age; and yet how modestly does he speak of himself in the Text. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

The words give us a description, not only of a Christian, but of a Christian in a very thriving state; for, he says, a little after, "let as many as be perfect, be thus minded." And he proposes himself to the people as an example. Compared then with others, and considered as a Father in Christ, and an established Christian, he was at that time a perfect man. But if perfection be understood in the strict and exact sense of the words, he tells us in the Text he was far from it. He had "not yet attained, he was not perfect." In what sense he was perfect, and in what imperfect, is not hard to understand, if we attend to the Scriptural meaning of these words.

He had a sincere love of God, even that perfect love which casteth out fear, as St. John speaks. So has every sincere Christian in the world. All true Converts love God; and when they have been long established in their holy faith and love, they are called Fathers* in Christ. But, alas! they still feel how low and poor their attainments are. The prospect before them is so vast; and they find they are so far from loving their God as they ought, that, with St. Paul, they feel it their duty to do this one thing; namely, to forget those things that are behind, and to reach forth unto those things that are before†. "I am following after," says he, "to

* 1 John ii. 13. † Philip. iii. 13.

apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." He knew Christ had first apprehended or taken hold of him, to make him a child of God, an heir of glory, a partaker of his own fulness. What a large view is comprehended in this thought! What is that, for which Christ apprehends a sinner; but to save, and sanctify, and bless him with all spiritual blessings in himself for ever?

Paul sees that his Salvation will be complete at the resurrection, and not till then. He will at that day, body and soul, be presented before God completely and exactly perfected. How is it that Christians do not so simply look at the resurrection and day of judgment now as the first Christians did? We should not, Brethren, be fancying that, in this life, there exists, in any sense, some imaginary point or moment, of complete happiness. Doubtless, we ought to prize much and seek diligently what is to be attained here;—but I would to God I knew how to make real Christians feel that it is both their duty and their privilege to look above and beyond all this, to the resurrection, to the PRIZE of their high calling*. Then would they thrive and grow indeed, and have the world under their feet. Remember, Christ has apprehended you for this purpose, that you should obtain, after death, the prize of a happy and glorious resurrection. This consideration should be very familiar to your meditations; it should refresh your drooping spirits; it should invigorate all your religious resolutions. If believers think little of this, and permit their religious thoughts to run only on present attainments, they are not likely to be growing

* Philip. iii. 14.

Christians. St. Paul sees for what Christ has apprehended him, and what a glorious state is in reserve for him. He follows on to apprehend as much of it, by way of foretaste, as he can in this life, sensible always how little he has attained, and longing and labouring for perfection in heaven. He, whom death shall find thus employed, is not only a TRUE, but an ESTABLISHED Christian, and none of his sins or imperfections shall be imputed to him. The blood of Jesus covers all; for he is found in him, not in his own righteousness, and he walks in the way which God has appointed, and which leads to heaven.

To finish the explanation of the Text. You have, in this true servant of God, an instructive example of a thriving Christian. St. Paul is conscious that Christ has apprehended him; he knows for certain he has apprehended him, yet he follows after to attain*; fully sensible that he is very imperfect at present; but he continues doing this one thing as the business of life, even looking steadily to heaven, to Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, to the resurrection of the just, and to a happy and glorious immortality.

From the view of the Apostle's frame of heart, thus illustrated, some useful caution and advice may be given; first, to thriving Christians; secondly, to lukewarm, careless, or presumptuous professors of religion; and, thirdly, to irreligious and profane persons.

1. Thriving Christians may hence derive encouragement and salutary advice. Your knowledge,

* Philip. iii. 10, 11, 12.—These verses explain what the things were, which St. Paul was striving to know and to attain unto.

Brethren, of your own heart; your care and watchfulness against sin; your earnest desire to please God; joined with the experience of your daily imperfections, will be apt to cast you down, if you be not fortified with just views of the grace of God, and your privileges and real situation as his children. This evil is more to be feared when the malice and subtilty of Satan's devices are taken into the account, against which you are not always sufficiently on your guard. I never knew a serious Christian, but he was disposed to think, that after a course of years he would have been further advanced in holiness than he actually finds himself to be. The fact is, he is, as before, still a sinner: He follows after: He strives: He has an idea of apprehending that for which Christ has apprehended him: Sometimes he seems just on the point of having attained it; he seems to be filled with all the fulness of God, and swallowed up with divine love. But,—so it is;—his brightest attainment, even the precious heaven of communion with Christ, is often taken out of his sight, just when he is going to enter, as it were, into full possession. This is his experience through life, so that he never completely hits the mark at which he aims. The flesh weighs him down; some ensnaring temptation intervenes; his sun is clouded; his faith, when strongest, is liable to be assaulted; his hope, when most cheerful and lively, is damped from time to time; and his love has its weaknesses, its declensions, and variations. The flesh mixes itself so continually with all his best experiences and exercises, that no dispositions, no frames, no works whatever, even the very best of them, in his best state on earth, are, properly speaking, perfect.

Nay, this is the case with the most perfect, that is, the most sincere Christians, in whom the principle of grace is the strongest that it is likely to be, on this side of eternity.

Nevertheless I dare not withhold from such the consolation which the Scripture exhibits. I know how needful it is for their growth, their liberty, their thankfulness to God, and their honouring of their Saviour. Brethren, go on with St. Paul; confess humbly, to your own shame, and with an entire renunciation of your own righteousness, that you have not attained nor are perfect. But follow on to apprehend, as he did, that for which Christ apprehended you. Oh! consider what glory, what bliss, what sweetness of enjoyment is before you! You shall in truth apprehend the whole. There is a glorious liberty of the children of God, and a putting off of the bondage of corruption, as you are told in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Doubt not, but earnestly believe that it shall not always be thus. In this life you must hope for that which you see not, and in patience wait for it. St. Paul uses the expression, "Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of your body." And the same apostle tells you in the same chapter, that in this life, the Spirit helps your infirmities, and you must bear the warfare till he call you hence. You may with comfort look forward to that glorious hope. Then Christ and you shall be so perfectly united, that you shall never more have any thing to do with sinful flesh; but love shall fill you without interruption for ever.

This is the Scripture view. It carries the mind directly forward to the next life; and not in vain,

for your title is firm and sure, not grounded on your own righteousness, but on Christ; not on what measures of grace you attain, but on "the gift of God, which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." By faith apply to your High Priest, and his cleansing blood, and most precious intercession, all your days, and you will still have solid peace. Use all means against sin, your most deadly foe. But, "if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." The most upright saints have no other dependence than this: fear not to trust to it; and fail not to profit by it. Pray the Lord's prayer all your days, imploring daily forgiveness, because you daily need it; and be thence reminded of daily forgiving others, as that prayer directs you. While you continue seeking, following, doing "this one thing, forgetting things behind, reaching forth to things before, pressing forward," do not be impatient or discouraged, because the flesh interrupts and distracts you. The very prospect of heaven is made more precious to you by these troubles and hinderances. There you shall feel the motions of sin no more. So long as you dread all sin; and loathe yourselves on account of it; and labour against it as your greatest enemy; and in your practice live sōberly, righteously, and godly; rest assured, though the inward feeling of imperfection be grievous, sin can never prevail over you to your ruin. If you believe not this, to what purpose do we preach Christ crucified and interceding for us? This is the nature of his Salvation: This is the refreshment which he promises to the weary and heavy laden who come unto him: This is the

deliverance, which he has wrought out for those, who otherwise would be "all their life-time subject to bondage*." Remember, then, that, not only at your first conversion, but also through life, and in death he will be with you, and conduct you safe into his mansions.

The Lord enable you to understand and reap the full benefit of these scriptural directions. You are in the same state with St. Paul, and while you walk in the path of holiness, it is impossible you should perish. Use the same means, which he did, to preserve your consciences from guilt and torment, and you shall rejoice in Christ, remain thankful, and be enabled to press forward with success.

Together with all this consolation, I must direct you to follow on, that you may attain more and more. Though you cannot attain all the happiness you wish in this life, neglect not to seek what you may attain. Consider what Christian graces are weakest in you; what there is in your temper, your situation in life, your circumstances, your habits, your employments in the world, which particularly molests you. And watch in these respects, that you may be delivered from murmuring and discontent; that patience may have its perfect work; and that you may learn more meekness and long-suffering. Guard against the world; and labour to be more mortified from its pursuits; its spirit, and its taste; that as you grow nearer to your latter end, you may have your desires and thoughts more centered on Jesus. Often humble yourselves before God for having attained so little, and for having given way to those evils, which experience shows you to be

* Heb. ii. 15.

hurtful to your souls. Avoid those things which you know to be snares; pray more in secret; retire more from the world; let your conversation be more guarded.

Acquaintance even with Christian people must be carefully attended to, by him who means, with St. Paul, to follow on, that he may apprehend Christ. Choose to converse, if you have opportunity, with the liveliest and the most spiritual Christians. Do not be disgusted because you are behind them in grace; but study to learn from them; and take care of being encouraged in a trifling frame of mind, by the examples of too many who profess themselves to be religious. Alas! numbers, who make a profession of divine things, who are in easy circumstances, and without any particular crosses, are no proper patterns for you to follow. I know that among the poor there are found selfish hypocrites; but the SINCERE POOR, who simply follow Christ, are those whose example you need not be ashamed to follow. They live most by faith; and in general you may learn much more of St. Paul's frame from them than from the richer sort, even of sincere Christians.

Never omit seasons of private prayer and recollection. MUCH COMPANY IS THE BANE OF ALL TRUE GROWTH IN GRACE. Endeavour that the company you keep may be such as may enliven, not deaden, your souls. Meditate on death and eternity often. Keep the resurrection in view constantly. Your salvation is nearer than when you first believed. Finally, remember, as Christ hath told you, that ONE THING is needful. Imitate the pattern of St. Paul, the CHOSEN VESSEL, this day set before you, "doing this one thing," and you will wax

stronger and stronger, till you arrive at your happy and everlasting home.

I have hitherto been speaking to thriving Christians, that is, to those in whose life no blot appears. The next sort are those professors of religion, who, though it be not evident that they are mere hypocrites, or decisively so, yet their practice, in some or other respects, appears outwardly to be unbecoming the Gospel of Christ. I beseech you attend to the Text. You have in it the example of a man walking as becomes a Christian. You are not called upon to imitate Paul as an eminent Apostle, or as an inspired Writer, but as a follower of Christ, such as you are, or profess yourself to be. He looked on himself, not as having already attained, or as being perfect. Far from it. He was humbly conscious how little he had attained; how much was still to do; how very far short he fell of the pattern of his Divine Master. Indeed if he had thought of being justified before God by his own works, and had had no other plan of salvation, the consciousness of his imperfections and great unworthiness must have caused him to despair, as it will every serious person who knows himself. It is not possible for any but careless, or proud, or presumptuous persons to rest easy under the idea of relying on their own righteousness for salvation; whence I conclude, that it is indeed a false doctrine. In this very chapter, in which the Apostle describes so particularly his own frame and state, he expressly renounces his own righteousness, that he may be found in Christ, and in him alone be accepted. This is his dependance. But here he does not stop. Nor will any man stop here, who, like him, has tasted of the love

of God, and knows what holiness means. Holiness itself is happiness: He sees that Christ has apprehended him, that he may be holy. When he considers how little he has attained of this the true disposition for heaven, he follows after, that he may apprehend that holiness, for which Christ apprehended him: indeed his hope lies in the hold that Christ has of him, strong and invincibly firm; not in HIS hold of Christ, which is never, by any means, so strong as it ought to be.

But is it not plain, O lukewarm Christians, that his state is very different from yours? When you were first awakened to a concern for your souls, you eagerly sought for pardon and peace in Christ. Sin was at that time so terrible a thing to you, that you endeavoured to keep clear of all approaches to it. Is then the doctrine of salvation by Christ, which you have now for years understood, to release you from your obligation to labour and endeavour after holiness? If you have found out, that formerly, perhaps you were needlessly scrupulous in some things, are you now to be quite loose and negligent, and to evidence very little difference between yourselves and the irreligious people of the world? Have you now really nothing to do; have you, in religion, no call for further exertion? Can you think it right to rest in an easy, dull, uniform way for many years, without any improvement in grace? If you can; may you not justly question whether you have any right foundation in Christ, and whether you have not been building your house on the sand*? His ways use to be reckoned ways of pleasantness, and all his paths to be peace. If you can be so indif-

* Matth. vii. 26.

ferent about walking in them, it may be questioned whether you know them aright, so as to love them.

It is not either for you or me to undertake to settle, whether, in your present state, you are true Children of God, or not. Rather do you give diligence to make your calling and election sure, by exercising yourselves in faith, hope, and charity; and by stirring up yourselves to take hold of God's covenant, and to walk as becometh Christians.

What, are there not many evils under which you labour? I am sure if you have spiritual feeling, you must be burdened; and the burden of your mind will be one of the most hopeful symptoms of spiritual life. Consider how it should be with you. If Christ has apprehended you, it is that you should feel, and think, and speak, and act in a very different manner from what you do at present. Indeed, if you were in ever so lively a frame, you would still be far from what you ought to be. But you should have real work on your hands, and be diligent in that work. You cannot be right if your religious employment consist in barely making a profession of doctrine. A preacher who would tell you of nothing else, and only bid you comfort yourselves that all was safe, might suit you best, but such preaching would be poison, not food for your souls. It would not deserve the name of pastoral instruction.

Come to particulars, I beseech you. Is that love of the world, which you have, for years, laboured under, in any measure subdued? The nearer you approach to your latter end, are you the more earnestly engaged in preparing for it? Do you find your thoughts and desires more taken off from the

things of the world, and do you now long more to be dissolved and to be with Christ: Is your disposition more charitable, meek, patient, and more resigned to the Divine will? Are you less disposed to murmurings and repinings; to froward, perverse, and malignant passions and suspicions, than formerly? Is your tongue more under government, and less disposed to censoriousness: more apt to dwell on divine things, and to be less engaged in trifles, than formerly? Are you doing good with more cheerfulness, and are your thoughts and imaginations more subdued? Burns the flame of divine love more in your souls?—But I shall spare other particulars. Only I ask you concerning your besetting, constitutional, sin, whatever it be? What is its state? Are you always disposed to vindicate it, or even so blind as not to know it?

I know that the most holy and the most sincere are always the most humble. And when particulars come to be examined, they are ready to cry out "unclean, unclean." They see themselves to fall far short of their duty. But are you of those who make this an excuse for standing still and doing nothing? And do you look on your sins rather as weaknesses, for which you are to be pitied, than as evils which alienate you from God, and for which you deserve to be condemned? Assure yourselves, if this be the case, that Christ did not come to save such proud persons as you are. And you have reason to fear lest you be found at last, among those to whom he will say, "I never knew you." The real Christian can, after all, rest only in Christ; but when he does so, he is not content with remaining under the power of his sins. He daily labours against

them; and rests not till he obtains a growing victory over them. I exhort you, Brethren, diligently to examine yourselves, and to seek for this certain evidence of a safe and excellent spiritual condition, that so an entrance may be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I speak, lastly, a word to careless and profane persons. What says the drunkard, the swearer, the sabbath-breaker, the lover of pleasure more than lover of God? What answer will YE give to this important question? Are YE following on to apprehend the things of Christ? Your consciences tell you ye have nothing to do with Him. Ye have never begun to be Christians. Satan is your master. Tremble, if ye be not hardened beyond feeling and exhortation: and repent to the saving of your souls.

If a man think all is well with him, merely because he is honest and quiet, and peaceable, in society, he surely deceives himself. To be so is, unquestionably, right and laudable; it is even a necessary branch of duty, as I have repeatedly observed; but it is neither the whole nor the best part of duty. To learn to love God; to renounce our own righteousness; to believe in Christ alone for salvation; to be heartily thankful for redemption through his blood; and, by the love of Christ, felt in the soul, to be stirred up and constrained to live soberly, righteously, and godly, these things are necessary to make a Christian. If words can prove any thing, the Scripture shows us these great truths every where. And when any man begins to seek for this inward religion, he will find, from the opposition and rebellion

of his corrupted nature, that he needs that NEW BIRTH of which the Scripture speaks, and he will pray for it sincerely. But if bare honesty and external propriety of conduct make a man fit for heaven, how comes it that, in all ages, there have not been found greater enemies of Christ's Gospel, than some of this very character have been? Is this the religion of Jesus? Is this the whole mystery of godliness? Many have had this without the smallest portion of Christianity: There have been Pagan moralists who, by their lives, might cover with shame those, who call themselves Christians.

Brethren, consider, "To apprehend Christ, to win Christ, to be found in him," is what St. Paul teaches. Go and learn what these and such like expressions mean. Examine, search, pray, inquire where truth lies, and learn real Christianity now, lest you learn what it is, when it will be too late to save your precious and immortal souls.

SERMON XX.

THE SONG OF SIMEON.

Luke, ii. 26.

And it was revealed unto Him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

FROM these words I shall take occasion to consider the case of old Simeon, his character, and the completion of the promise in the Text. I shall thence be enabled to lay before you the true source of that peace and resignation which he possessed, and to exhort you to follow his example. Let me bespeak the attention of you all, and in particular of persons in the decline of life; for their sakes more immediately I chose this subject, which, notwithstanding, I will endeavour to render useful to men of all ages, and also not unsuitable to the solemnities of this holy Season *.

When our Lord was brought by his parents to Jerusalem, to be presented according to the rites of Moses's law, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and this man was just and devout; equally respectable among men for his observance of BOTH Tables. A partial Obedience is no Obedience. He who seems to be pious to-

* Christmas.

wards God, without justice towards man, is a hypocrite. This, I suppose, no one here will deny. He also, who seems to be just towards men, and is without devotion towards God, is equally a hypocrite. There is no sincere virtue in him; he is not just towards men; if he is so in the letter, as to external duties, he certainly is not so in the spirit before God. The spiritual duties, which he owes to his fellow-creatures, in warning, instructing, and rebuking sinners, he cannot perform. But Simeon, in the verse before the Text, is said to have been BOTH "just and devout;" and to have been "waiting for the consolation of Israel." Moreover, it is added, "and the Holy Ghost was upon him." The consolation of Israel is Messiah the Prince and Saviour, whom I suppose, according to the prophecies of Daniel, he expected to appear on earth about this time. It seems he ardently waited for his coming on earth, and longed above all things to see him before he died. We do not hear that he desired to live till he had amassed such and such sums; till he had seen all his children settled in the world; till he had secured such and such points; but, for aught that appears, THIS, THIS,—"to see the Lord's Christ,"—was the sole object, for which he desired to live; and which being obtained, he is content to die in peace. This was a sure sign of a regenerate heart, thirsting after spiritual and heavenly good.

Old people cannot but wish to see their dearest relations well provided for, before they die; yet if they are really Christians, their leading desire will be, to see both themselves and their children interested in the Gospel, and partakers of its Salvation.

Natural affection dictates to them to wish the very best things for those whom they tenderly love; but spiritual affection directs their wishes to right objects. Hence, they are ardently desirous of their relatives becoming believers in Christ, because then they leave them with a comfortable prospect, on both sides, of meeting again in the kingdom of God.—A hopeful state of their precious souls they heartily prefer to every thing else; nor can they hesitate a moment, whether they would choose to leave their most beloved kindred in contemptible obscurity, yea in the condition of the meanest beggars, but partakers of God's grace, or, among the high and splendid orders of the most rich and powerful, but, without the fear of the Lord.—Ye Fathers and Mothers, weigh whether ye are thus affected with regard to your children; and consider, whether your principal concern on their account has been that they may be true Christians.

Simeon, no doubt, had often prayed that he might see the Lord's Christ before he died; and God graciously heard him. "It was revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, till he had seen the Lord's Christ." Our Heavenly Father dealt with him in the dispensing of this blessing, as he does with his Children in general. He gives him his promise to depend on; but, by not gratifying him immediately with the completion of it, he exercises his faith and patience. The probability, if we attend merely to the course of nature, is perhaps against the happening of that event upon which the good Old Man had set his heart. He is fast declining in years, yet with Abraham he "staggers not*,"

* Rom. iv. 20. He staggered not at the promise of God.

and with him, "after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." He saw Christ; nay more, "He took him up in his arms." The Children of God will, in the end always find HIS promises to exceed their hopes. The worldly things we wait for, generally prove less in the enjoyment than they appeared in anticipation: But God's promises are worth waiting for; they are sure to be fulfilled, and when they are fulfilled they always delight, always satisfy, and never disappoint; but even exceed all we can ask or think.

Is not the case of real Christians thus, as it was with this just, this devout, this waiting Saint?* O Brethren, let me persuade you to renounce your own righteousness, and with earnest and persevering resolution, to apply to Jesus for righteousness and strength; and you will find the same cause for rejoicing in your God as Simeon did. It stands recorded among the sacred words of Truth, that Jesus is now, and will be in Eternity, the Saviour of those who listen to his invitations, "Come unto me," and, "abide in me." Again, "if a man keep my sayings," says our Lord, "he shall never taste of death." On these promises believers are to live, in order to be holy and happy, and from these to derive all their hope, light, and strength, and no one good thing promised will fail.

But we have not yet sufficiently laid open the principles on which Simeon acted. Though he had never seen Christ in the flesh, he had known him by faith: he had believed and cast his soul upon Him that was to come. So did all the Saints of the Old Testament; as ye learn from the Epistle

* Luke, ii. 25.

to the Hebrews. His motives, then, did not originate in mere matter of curiosity;—for he must have known, that to see Christ merely with the bodily eyes, has no saving efficacy. Christ was seen by those Jews who passed by, wagging their heads, and railing at him, when he was crucified. We are apt to think, Oh! how happy those who saw the Lord of glory in the flesh. Sense would plead powerfully for such a manifestation; and the mourning sinner perhaps longs to be in the place of the penitent woman, mentioned in the seventh chapter of St. Luke, who heard him pronounce with his lips, "thy sins are forgiven thee, thy faith hath saved thee." It is difficult to persuade ourselves, that we, at this day, have as good opportunities of knowing his forgiving love as she had. No truth, however, more certain; and I may justly add, the practical consequences connected with it are of the least importance. The promises of the Gospel are not made to the beholder of the person of Christ; but to the believer on his name. "Blessed," says he, "are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Without the grace of his Spirit we could no more believe, even if we saw him in the flesh, than we can now. Simeon was filled with the Holy Ghost; and in consequence of that, he knew Christ to be his Saviour, before he saw him with his bodily eyes. So that that generation was in a state of no higher probability of salvation than any other. And, in fact we find that, by far the major part of it would not believe in him. If Simeon had not trusted in Christ as his Saviour, the beholding of him with his eyes would have been as nothing. So true is that observation of St. Austin,

that if Mary had not had Jesus in her heart, as well as on her knee, she would not have been blessed among women. He came into the temple, by the direction of God, at that particular time: But observe, it was in the Temple that he was to receive this FRESH testimony of God's love. If you expect God's favour to be manifested to you, throw yourselves in his way, the way of duty, in conscientious attendance on ordinances. Those, who make light of them, show they are not seeking God in good earnest. I use the expression FRESH testimony of God's love, because I would put you in mind that good men always long for repeated proofs of the loving-kindness of their God; and because is is very plain that Simeon had tasted of this loving-kindness before this instance of it which we are now considering, otherwise he would not have been called in Scripture "just and devout, and one filled with the Holy Ghost;" a description which only belongs to believers in Jesus Christ.

When the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the law, HE took him up in his arms. This was a glorious scene, when we consider that he knew the child which he held in his arms to be his Lord, his God, his sure Saviour. How must the old man's eyes have sparkled with joy, and his heart have been affected with the sense of God's Peace, in the completion of this promise! How did he see himself honoured by the Lord! And with what freedom and joy did he bless God! "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." Gladly would he die, since God had fulfilled

the desire of his soul. Sweet peace and resignation! I hope I need not now show you the sources of them; a full consciousness of God's friendship, a sober certainty of bliss. Without these he could not have talked of peace, nor have been so resigned. "For mine eyes have seen THY salvation;" sweet name! He calls Jesus God's Salvation, and Jesus itself signifies Saviour. It was a Salvation of God's contriving, accepting, and applying to the souls of men; and if Simeon had not believed this Salvation to be his own, he could not have spoken so joyfully of dying. Pray, Brethren, for his faith, and you may then bless God in the same manner, and enjoy the same resignation, peace, and joy.

"Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of thy people Israel." It would be of great use, did we learn to apply Scripture-truths as if they were directed like a letter to us in particular; otherwise they are of little value. You, who compose this congregation, are Gentiles. Are you in darkness? Are you sensible that you stand in need of a divine illumination? Behold! here is the "light to lighten" you; he that believeth on him, as he saith, shall not walk in darkness.

Now it is time to apply to ourselves good old Simeon's experience; and as his principles and the story are sufficiently laid open, let me exhort you not to mistake, as most of his generation did, the nature of the Salvation of Christ. They regarded the Saviour with merely a general belief: Do you, with Simeon, seek to possess * him for your own

* 1 John, v. 12. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life.

happiness, both now and ever. Recollect he came to be the Prince of Peace. Cease not your prayers, cease not your importunities*, till you know he is your peace, till you can join with old Simeon every Sabbath-afternoon, with all your heart, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy Salvation;" till, under the reading of the New Testament, you can receive its promises, and thus express your sense of God's peace, your hope of deliverance from the fear of death, and your resignation to the divine will.

In repeating this Hymn of Simeon, as well as others appointed by the Church, it is to be feared there is much hypocrisy, much dead formality among us! Simeon declares that Christ is, "a light to lighten the Gentiles." Deceive not yourselves with a cold assent to general propositions, as hypocrites do; but put the questions home each man to himself. Has Christ been a light to me? Have I been conscious of my sitting in darkness without him? Has he guided my feet into the way of peace? What am I doing? Am I waiting on him, above all things, to the end that my heart may be purified, as it can be only by faith in him? Or am I quite careless about the matter? Dead in sins, with no knowledge of divine reconciliation?—If so,—whatever light Christ may be to others, he is no more to you than if he had never come into the world, to visit the Gentiles by his grace.

To you in particular, who are in the decline of life, I would say; If you have believed on Jesus to the knowledge of the remission of sins; if you are walking in this light; if you can depart in peace,

* See Luke xi.

having seen his Salvation, happy are ye. The Mission of Jesus has to you answered its end: Do you show forth the praises of the Lord, in a course of heavenly-mindedness; and be not slack to exhort others; and tell them, from your own experience, that there is a peace to be FELT in religion. Be patient under God's hand, and wait his time, when he will remove you hence unto himself.

But if there be any here, yet burdened with guilt and unbelief, though there may be reason to hope that you are really seeking the face of God, examine yourselves, and see that you be not self-conceited with the opinion of your own wisdom, as old men are frequently too apt to be; and take care of worldly-mindedness, that absurd vice of Old Age. Look at Simeon for a pattern, and believe that the Spirit of God will do for you as HE did for him. If you commit your souls to God with the earnest prayer of faith, the eyes of your mind shall see his Salvation, and you also will be enabled to sing, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."

But, I fear, there are old persons among us, who have always thought themselves safe, notwithstanding that they have never known their own lost state, nor the all-sufficient Salvation of Jesus. Pride, shame, prejudice, and an admiration of their own good qualities, during a long course of formal prayers, and attendance on the Sacrament,—all conspire to hinder them from receiving the Lord's Christ. Oh! it is sorely grievous to nature for them to own they have yet their religion to seek; to give up themselves as lost sinners, and to consider their performances, which they had supposed pious and

meritorious, as defective, and as having "the nature of sin*," and to trust wholly in the righteousness of Jesus Christ: Painful Sacrifice! Thoughts of this kind cause their hearts to rise with indignation: Yet thus it must be: They must learn to see their lost state, and to put no confidence in their own works or deservings, no TRUST in their own prayers, endeavours, strength, or wisdom, to look on all these things, as no proper foundation, either in whole or in part, for acceptance with God, and to make this simple plea, "Lord, I am deserving of Hell, and can do nothing to ward off thy vengeance, have mercy on me, for Christ's sake; I cast my soul on him only; without him I am lost for ever." Thus are they to flee from the wrath to come, or they cannot escape it.

Other old persons, I fear, there are, who are yet slaves to the cares or pleasures of the world. What shall I say? It is time for you to ask yourselves the question, What must I do to be saved? Consider; the young MAY not live long: You MUST die soon. What do you learn from those trembling hands and tottering knees? Is it for you to be as anxious about worldly gain, as if the fashion of this world were to last for ever? Have you so much time on your hands, that you can afford to throw it away in gaming? Is it for you to dress, to mix in the gaieties of life, to affect a levity of conduct and conversation which you have neither health nor spirits to support? Will God's forbearance never have an end? Will you vindicate a frivolous and pleasurable course of life as necessary for your amusement? Consider that

* See Article XIII. of Religion.

were you in heaven you could have no pleasures that would suit your taste; and consider further, that as you die, so must you remain for ever. "He that is unholy, must be unholy still."—Does not this indicate that your hearts are not fit for heavenly society? Were you as you should be, religion itself would be your amusement: Were you reconciled to God, you would find the contemplation of his promises, in his word, sufficient entertainment, without any occasion for fashionable pleasures to supply the vacancy of the tedious hours. Let me ask you these necessary questions. Have you any good reason to believe that you are born again*? What evidence have you, besides the patience and long forbearance of God, that HE now loves you? Or, can you honestly say that, in return for his love, you have given him your whole heart? Should not you be afraid of dying? Durst you say with Simeon, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace?" Go home, and let the questions which I have asked you ring in your ears, and sink into your hearts, and remain there for matter of private meditation. If you find yourselves angry, ask whether the cause be not that you are conscious of your danger? If you be tempted to fly from serious thought, is it not a proof that you cannot bear the accusations of an evil CONSCIENCE? May Almighty God bring you to a hearty concern for eternity. Oh! humble yourselves before him; look to the Saviour, and rest not till you know that he is yours "to the saving of the soul†."

Consider also whether you have not much to answer for before God, for having been the means

* John iii. 3. † Heb. x. 39.

of corrupting youth by your bad example and conversation. Ask yourselves, have I taught my children to pray and seek the Lord? Have I been frequent and earnest in instructing them, and keeping up the spirit of family-religion? Have their souls, and those of my Apprentices and Servants, lain upon my heart? Have I been concerned for their spiritual more than for their temporal good? What example have I set them? If any of my Children manifestly lead wicked lives, will not they on this head have cause to accuse me at the last day? But, —dreadful thought!—Have not some of them laboured in all sincerity to serve God with a good conscience, and to escape the pollutions of the world, and do not I, in effect, hinder and prevent them? Do not I perpetually tell them, that they are unnecessarily anxious concerning the care of the soul; too scrupulous, in general, about religious matters; that they spend too much time in these things, or think too deeply on them; that they grow gloomy, unsocial, and enthusiastic? Again, have I not in some instances, even enjoined them no longer to frequent the company or follow the ways of persons, whom I thought over-religious, or too much abstracted from the customs of the world? Did I, or did I not do this for the purpose of preventing further SERIOUS impressions on their minds? And lastly, with the design of effacing such impressions, have I not often taken advantage of the taste or temper of my children; laid snares for them in various ways; and particularly, by introducing them to pernicious amusements and diversions?—It will be a poor defence here to say that

you always intended their good, when the FACT stands against you, that you may have ruined their souls.—Tremble, O grey-headed sinners, if any of you know yourselves thus guilty:—To have destroyed their bodies were a far less evil in its consequences.

Let your past lives, however, have been what they may, if, with God's blessing, I have reached the consciences of any, you need not despair. Come to Christ's blood, convinced of sin, and he will save you to the uttermost. Those, indeed, who delay their conversion to the eleventh hour, have to struggle with many difficulties. For, notwithstanding that they may be exceedingly desirous to seek after God, and to give him their hearts, they will be sore let and hindered by the habits and prejudices which they must have contracted. These have been rendered stubborn by time. They will find them not easy to be subdued. "Can the Ethiopian, saith the Lord, change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil *." I say this not to discourage any of my aged hearers, who lament their past neglect of Christ, but to stir them up to diligence, in the business of their salvation. All things are possible with God, and if you seek earnestly to win Christ, and to be found in him, you will not seek in vain.

You, who are young, and have not yet contracted strong habits of iniquity, or rooted prejudices against the truth, have not to contend with the same hinderances. Avail yourselves of the advantages which you possess: Remember your Creator now

* Jer. xiii. 23.

in the days of your youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them *. If you wish to glorify God, by your living and dying behaviour, you must begin, in early life, to look for "the consolation of Israel," and to wait on the Lord in the diligent use of all his ordinances. If you desire, with the aged Simeon, to depart in peace, your eyes having seen the Lord's salvation, you must employ the same means, which Simeon employed, you must walk in the same steps in which Simeon walked. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" A question of the last importance. And the answer, both brief and satisfactory, is to be found in the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, in the same verse in which the question is asked; "by taking heed thereto, according to God's word †."

To conclude. May the design of our Lord's coming in the flesh be fulfilled in you all, both old and young! May you depart from iniquity, and cleave to him for righteousness and strength! May you rejoice in Christ Jesus, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment!

* Eccles. xii. 1. † Psalm cxix. 9.

SERMON XXI.

THE PORTION OF THE MEN OF THE WORLD, AND THE HOPE OF THE GODLY.

Psalm xvii. 14, 15.

Men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasures: They are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me, I will behold thy presence in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

THOUGH the evidences of a future state are by no means so clear in the Old Testament as in the New, yet it may seem wonderful, that any learned men should have asserted that in the former, there is to be found no revelation whatever of a future life or of immortality. The truth is, these positions are there repeatedly revealed. The single passage before us contradicts the opposite opinion; and at the same time serves to admonish ingenious and learned persons, that, in religious inquiries, when they lean, as the Scripture says, to their own understandings *, they are ever in danger of falling into the most gross and palpable absurdities.

* Prov. iii. 5.

I have chosen to introduce no more words into the Text than what directly relate to the subject in view. What was particular in David's circumstances, and gave occasion to these words, shall now be briefly mentioned.

David had many enemies; and in his Psalms, he frequently prays to be delivered from them. No man's life was ever more variously exercised than his; and therefore we read very much both of his inward and his outward trials. We have indeed an opportunity, in his case, of seeing godliness tried in all possible ways. The Psalms are, therefore, the Christian's book of experience. Meditations and prayers there may be met with, by every one who fears God, exactly suited to his own case, from time to time, and affording him language the most proper to express his various feelings. In the Psalm before us, he prays against the designs of his enemies, and beseeches the Lord to deliver his soul from the wicked; "which is thy sword, from men which are thy hand, O Lord." Wicked men are, as it were, the Lord's sword, hand, or instrument for executing his counsels. They can do no more than what he ordains or permits.

David remarks of them, that they are MEN OF THE WORLD; men who live for this world, and as if there were no other; who have no taste for any thing but what is of this world. "Which have their portion in this life." They desire no other; their affections are here only: and "whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure." This is often the case: and, by this very dispensation, it sufficiently appears of how little value in the eyes of the Lord

are worldly riches and worldly grandeur. These things, after which the unconverted pant so greedily, are often committed to the management of men who have no love for God: Nay, such men often possess them in abundance; "they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes." To conclude life in this way, is the highest felicity of a worldly man. He is so selfish that his benevolence extends very little beyond his own family. If then he has many children; possesses riches during his own life, and has the prospect of leaving much wealth among his children that they may possess it after him; he enjoys all that his heart wishes, or for which he has any taste.

But all this will not satisfy a child of God. Every real saint, in the world, will turn from these things to that which supremely engages his affections. "As for me I will behold thy presence in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." In this world he is far from being satisfied. But he has a foretaste, a relish, a prospect, which cheers his heart, while he thinks of the future. The time will come, when he shall behold his God as he is; when in the morning of the glorious resurrection he shall awake from the dust, and find himself, in body and soul, made perfectly like the Saviour for whose coming he now looks and wishes: "Who shall change his vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself." He will then be perfectly conformed to his Saviour in righteousness: He will then behold, admire, and live upon his

excellencies and his loving-kindness.—This is David's heaven.—For this he waits.—And in this taste and disposition a real saint stands directly opposite to the character of a man of the world.

The Text gives us then, in a few words, a striking description of the difference between a worldly and a heavenly-minded man. I will endeavour to improve the instructive passage, by stating this difference a little more particularly and distinctly. To this end, I would first speak of "the Man of the World;" and secondly, of the Christian; not attempting to detail every thing at large of their characters, but rather to show, how they stand opposed to one another in their views of what each would call a happy termination of human life. My object is to furnish matter for self-examination to us; that we may know what our state is; and see for what we have to hope, or to fear; for what we have cause to rejoice or to grieve; and may learn, in the first case, to be thankful and persevere; in the second, to repent and believe the Gospel.

1. The unconverted man is a "man of the WORLD." This word has generally a bad sense in Scripture. Thus, "whosoever will be a friend of the WORLD is the enemy of God. They are of the world, and the world heareth them. Marvel not if the world hate you." 'MEN OF THE WORLD, who persecuted David, set their heart on this world. Its pomps and vanities, its pleasures and delights, its riches and honours, its wisdom and show of virtue without substance, are their treasure. They have no value for the things of another life. Though the idea of a God is not easily taken away from

the minds of men, they think of him as little as possible. They would wish him to contrive the government of the world so, that they should have health, agreeable friends and connexions, pleasures in abundance, success in their schemes, and gratification of their lusts and passions. If he would but permit them to live here as long as possible,—for ever, if that could be,—they would allow him to be a good and gracious Governor. But then, they would wish to have no intercourse with him. They have no idea of any pleasure resulting from society with him. They have no desire to behold his face, or ever to have more to do with him than they have at present. And yet many of them may have no objection to go through a decent form of religion, now and then, particularly on the Lord's day; but it is evident their notions of happiness suggest no duties or employments of this kind. They have their delight wholly in the world.

This is the way of all men, by nature, since the fall of our first Parents. Unconverted sinners have no other taste. They "have their portion in this life." And yet they very often find the course of things not to suit their wishes. By sickness or the danger of death they are frightened, at times, into something of more earnest religion. But nature is nature still; and as they are not born again, they easily, when the interruption is removed, return to their old course. Now, it is not needful to suppose, that the "man of the world" should be addicted to every vice. There may be some amiable qualities which adorn his character. He may, for instance, be humane and generous; and it is not at all necessary, that he should be a drunkard or

a miser,—in the offensive and disgraceful sense of those words. This circumstance often deceives men of the world. For possessing some good social qualities, and being free from some vices to which they see others addicted, they are ready enough to conclude themselves good men. This is one of the most common and fatal errors of persons of this class. Because still they are, "men of the world," while they "have their portion in this life," and have no love of God in them.

Ye with whom this is the case, consider what is the real frame and condition of your heart. It does not love God. You show no love to him in any one instance. Religious exercises are to you very unpleasant and irksome. You are glad when they are over. Shortness is with you the best recommendation they can have. And you do not love to converse freely with any person in a serious way, concerning the care of the soul; concerning the worth of eternity; concerning the preciousness of the Redeemer; or on any subject that might lead your minds to God. Such subjects throw a damp on YOUR spirits; and when alone, you do not choose to meditate on things of this nature. Yet you have wishes and desires. There is something that is uppermost in your mind. And what is that something? It is either God or the World; heavenly or earthly things: and by this very something your character must be determined; either that you are a godly man, or a man of the world.

Does not conscience tell you, that worldly things are your great object? You say, at times, you think of death and judgment: the hardened thief or murderer also thinks of the Judge and of the place of

execution. But he wishes he could not. He tries to dissipate such thoughts. They are very disagreeable to him. You have no delight in thinking of death and judgment; and what sort of pleasure heaven would afford you, if it were possible for you to arrive there, you may conceive by your present feelings. It would be a great punishment to you to be confined, for a month, to the company and acquaintance of truly pious persons. Their religious exercises and modes of conversation would be very irksome to you.—How disagreeable then would heaven itself be to you, where the service of God is the chief employment of the blessed for ever! Learn hence, that at present you are not fit for heaven, and that you need an entire change of heart, without which you never can arrive there.

But you know what you wish for, O men of the world. The Psalmist has expressed it: "whose bellies thou fillest with thy hid treasure. They are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes." You wish to be thus prosperous, as the men of the world formerly were, whose portion was in this life; who persecuted David, and treated him with much hatred and enmity. For this is the common way of such persons, from the dislike they have of godliness;—there at least your wishes are not feeble or lazy. You can feel these subjects, and think of them with spirit; and both talk and act concerning them with life and earnestness.

The "men of the world," mentioned in the Text, were favoured, it seems,—FAVOURED shall I say, or ACCURSED with the gratification of their wishes? They were full of money, and enriched with large

possessions, and saw a numerous race of children, and had large fortunes to bestow on them all. You think this is life indeed; this is enjoyment; this is to live to some purpose. And if you have success in your schemes, and find things to be with you, as the Psalmist describes them to have been with the men of the world, in his time, you seem to have done well. You will feel pleased with your own merit, and perhaps inwardly say, "my power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth." I am not now to speak of the empty, vain, and miserable state to which, after all, the greatest prosperity of this kind reduces you. My business is to show you, from your own feelings, views, and practices, that you are "men of the world," and, as such, unfit for the kingdom of heaven.

You may look back with a sort of triumph on your own management and industry; you may describe, with satisfaction, your artifices and address; your usefulness to the community; and your knowledge in business. You may take notice, with pleasure, from what low beginnings in life you have been raised thus high. You may talk of your money, your estates, your connexions, your rank and appearance in the world, the credit you are in, and the awe in which you hold mankind on account of your riches and consequence. But the soul cannot feed on such trash as this. Conscience itself is your accuser, and death is before you, and judgment draws nearer and nearer; and you have not the least relish, the least preparation for the state which is to come. What is it to you, that you will leave a great fortune behind you, and your children in the

possession of it? What is it to you, that numbers, once your equals, are now far your inferiors? Alas! what is all this to the happiness of the soul? "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" That is starving amidst all this opulence, and during all this success.

But some of you are not so prosperous; on the contrary, many have to struggle with difficulties. In cases of this kind, as "men of the world, who have their portion in this life," you will look up, with envy and admiration, to those who have been more fortunate. You fret, and murmur, and live in great anxiety. So that in one case you are lifted up with pride; and in the other, you are racked with discontent. Thus it is that poor persons may show, that they, as well as the rich, are "men of the world." And till they obtain a taste and disposition entirely new, entirely opposite to what they now profess, or, in other words, till the great, the divine, change of the new birth take place in them, they cannot be happy, either in this life, or in another. Such are the views, and such the state of mind of those who have their portion in this life.

2. Let us for a few moments turn our eyes to those who have their portion in a better world.

I am not going to represent either angels or saints in heaven. A real Christian, in this life, is far from being perfect. He may, in some qualities, and in some views, be even inferior to a "man of the world." Moreover, he has faults, which may be seen and known; they are often not of an ambiguous nature; though it be still true that he is liable to frequent misrepresentation. Yet after all, there

is an essential difference of character between him and the "man of the world." Men should not carry their scepticism so far as to make all alike. The difference between a Christian and a worldling, is as real, as that between the two different sorts of worlds to which they are hastening; as real as the difference between heaven and hell. It is not a just method of coming at the truth of their characters, to rely on counting the virtues of the one, and the vices of the other, and on setting off good things against bad ones. Nothing but confusion of character arises from this mode of trial. Look at the heart of each. Search the ruling passion; the governing principle. There you see what men are. The characters of men depend upon their habitual inclinations; in one word, upon their DISPOSITIONS. What we habitually and constantly wish to be, that we are in the sight of God, and so shall we be accounted at the day of judgment.

A real Christian's heart cries, "Whom have I heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of thee." He knows that his flesh and his heart will one day fail, but, nevertheless, "God is the strength of his heart, and his portion for ever." While he continues in this world, he is far from being what he wishes to be. He has the earnest of the Spirit indeed; but he has an ambition which this world can never gratify: its pleasures, honours, riches, he views with the eyes of a stranger. He sighs for that glorious redemption and liberty which he looks for above. Here he daily is burthened; and the most trying of all his burthens is his own corrupt nature. But he

looks forward to a glorious day, when he shall behold his Saviour in righteousness. He expects to see Jesus, who at present sustains him with aid unseen, comforts him with promises of future good, and undertakes to guide him, unworthy sinner as he is, to glory. And if a taste of his pardoning love, and a glimpse of the light of his countenance be so pleasant now, what will it be to enjoy the fulness of these things hereafter.

This then is the rest of a truly Christian character. He is supported, under present trials, with the prospect of immortality through Jesus. He, who constantly is so supported; and is longing, waiting, looking for his glorious appearing; and is, also by this prospect, animated to endure, has in himself a certain witness of his interest in Christ, and of a divine change of his affections. Let others look to what they please, he has "gladness of heart more than when their corn, and wine, and oil is increased." If in this life only he had hope, he would, perhaps, be of all men most miserable*: but as his joy arises from the steady expectation of a happy immortality, it cannot be very materially affected by poverty, or by worldly crosses.

It must however be remembered, that it is not any confused sort of prospect that forms the heaven after which the true Christian pants. Heaven without Christ would be Hell to him. He means to "behold the presence of Christ in righteousness." For it is in HIM that God becomes accessible, appears gracious; and is made visible to man: The body itself is, in this life, a great incumbrance to

* 1 Cor. xv. 19.

this holy man. But he shall awake by and by in the likeness of his Saviour. At present he is by faith united to Christ; and is one Spirit with him; a member "of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*." In law and justice he is ONE with him; redeemed from the curse by his surety, who bore the curse for him; and, in the Redeemer, made the righteousness of God †. His union with him is compared constantly, in Scripture, to that of a wife with an husband. How glorious will then his state be, when he shall "see face to face ‡;" when the vail shall be removed; when his likeness to his Saviour shall be complete; when an intimate communion with him shall be carried on for ever, without cloud, without impediment. Certainly he will "be SATISFIED;" he will behold the glory; admire the perfections; be ravished with the grace, and enjoy the goodness, of his Saviour for ever. All will be love, and joy, and peace; and no more sorrow, darkness, temptation, or pain. If, even now on earth, though not seeing his Saviour, he loves him, and rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory, what will that joy be in heaven?

Here then, I dare lay down one of the most certain proofs of a real Christian. Though his frame be not always as it should be;—far from it,—yet the new nature works in him constantly in the manner which I have been describing. And the grievous affliction, which he often feels on account of his sinful propensities, proves that his relish for holiness and for heaven lives in him in the midst of his failings and infirmities. A man may delude

* Ephes. v. 30. † 2 Cor. v. 21. ‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

himself with foolish raptures, and ungrounded fancies and presumptions; at the same time that the general course of his practice proves him a worldly man after all; at the same time that his pride, and selfishness, and deceit, thrive and domineer.—But where a divine principle prevails indeed, there is this spiritual, this heavenly taste: And it is the source of the purest pleasures which, in this world, are to be known. Whoever has the least portion of it, will despise and yet tenderly pity the condition of those who are looking for happiness from the things of this world.

This it is to pant after God, as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, by an appetite, natural indeed, but belonging to the NEW, not the OLD nature; an appetite not always equally keen, but always in existence, and always productive of prayer, and of a course of conduct quite opposite to any thing worldly. The love of Jesus is the pleasant theme of the new man, who never fails to feel his spirit united to those who love that precious name*; who never fails to pray, that "grace may be with all them who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

Enough has now been said to point out the two characters. The marks by which men may know themselves are very plain. Christian, is it not thus with thee? I allow, however, that if thou art a real Christian, thou thyself wilt be one of the last who can see the proofs of thy own blessed state.—But what mean the restlessness of mind after Christ;

* Matt. i. 21. Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.

the groaning in spirit, the earnest longings after Heaven, from time to time; the constant craving after spiritual pleasure and joy? Surely these affections are not from nature. They are of grace. Be assured, that as you dread sin above all things, it shall never be your ruin. As you love God in Christ above all things, you shall, after having cheerfully taken up and patiently borne your cross, enjoy communion with him for evermore.

I exhort all persons, who feel that they have no such desires and affections, but rather an aversion and disgust to them, not to deceive themselves with fancying their state to be good, when conscience tells them the contrary; when conscience tells them, that all their sensations of joy are of a worldly nature. But remember, what divine grace can still do for you; and, with a docile temper of mind, observe what it has done for those, whose dispositions are now spiritual. Their hearts were once like yours: Seek God, in Christ, for grace; and yours may become as theirs. "The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save*." If you perish, you are your own destroyer; you perish through your own obduracy and impenitence.

Let the great difference between both the character and the doom of these two sorts of persons, engage the serious thoughts of all that are here present. We are each of us either in the one class, or in the other. We are either vessels of honour, under preparation for a happy eternity, or vessels of wrath fitting for destruction†: If we be not found to be Christ's at his coming, we shall be found to

* Isai. lix. 1. † Rom. ix. 22, 23.

belong to the world; and the description of the world is that it lieth in wickedness *. If we rise not to glory in our Saviour's likeness, we shall "rise to shame and everlasting contempt †." May the Lord give us all grace to choose the good part, while it is in our power, that we may not be confounded in the day of his appearing.

* 1 John, v. 19. † Dan. xii. 2.

SERMON XXII.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

John, iii. 14, 15.

And as Moses lifted up the Serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

PRECIOUS declaration! most comfortable display of divine love! May that same Spirit of the blessed Jesus, who spake these words, be with you and me in considering them, that we may find them to be spirit and life to our souls!

To illustrate the words of the Text, it will be necessary to lay open the emblem of the Serpent. There is, I know, in these days of refinement, a great prejudice in men's minds against types, emblems, parables, and figures, and every thing of the metaphorical kind. We suppose that we have made great improvement in the art and power of reasoning; and we would have every subject laid before us in the strictest mode of ratiocination, and argument. I am persuaded that a great part of the enmity and disgust, which persons of breeding and education have against the Scripture, arises from this circumstance. Men would bring every thing to the bar of human reason: They forget, that, in spiritual

things, the human understanding is weak, blind, and depraved, and that human reason and right reason are two different things; that in many cases it is very rational to distrust our reasoning powers; and that always, it is our highest wisdom, to submit implicitly to the declarations of Holy Writ.—But besides this general account of the prejudice to which I allude, I may be permitted to observe further, that it is a very narrow and contracted prejudice. It is founded on our Northern taste. The parabolical and typical style would give no offence to Oriental ears. Neither was the Bible calculated particularly for philosophers, nor designed to make men philosophers; but for infinitely more generous purposes; for the salvation of souls, of the souls of mankind in general, and not of a few learned persons only. In this light, who does not see, that divine things may often be more strongly and more simply conveyed to the intelligence of the common people, by parables and comparisons, than by abstract reasonings? God knows what suits his creatures best. An unlearned simple mind will feed on a divine truth, conveyed in a type or emblem, and will receive a clear and strong impression in that way, when the capacity is not able to go through a strict course of reasoning. Many, indeed, I do fear, have helped to strengthen this prejudice, against types and figures, by the wrong, though well meant, use made of them. This, however, lessens not their real use. The law of Moses is altogether a type, or shadow: Perhaps it is not wrong to say, the whole Old Testament, or nearly so, is a continued display of types.—He, who undertakes to explain them, should know their law and order, and their right use, no doubt; but

in regard to the emblem of the Text, it must be allowed to be so clear and intelligible, that it explains itself, especially when we consider the light which the Divine Saviour in this passage throws upon it. Let us therefore, if you please, endeavour to sit at HIS feet, in all the simplicity of the vulgar and unlearned, and hear his words. They are not the words of Moses, or Paul,—though that would make no difference with the real believer of Scripture;—but they are the words of Jesus himself. He will naturally send us first, to the history of the Serpent, which is, briefly this, as you will find in the twenty-first chapter of the Book of Numbers. The Lord, to punish the rebellious Israelites, for their murmurings, "sent fiery Serpents among the people; and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." The punishment was severe, and their sin, in murmuring and disbelieving the kindness of so gracious a God, needed such a chastisement. A good effect was wrought on the minds of the congregation. In the seventh verse, they confessed to Moses their sin, in these words, "We have sinned; for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee: Pray unto the Lord, that he take away the Serpents from us: and Moses prayed for the people." The Lord is never slow to save, when men are truly humbled before him: He upbraideth not for the past.—He provided a method of cure for the dying people: but, mark how singular was the remedy on this occasion, and what a lesson of dependance on himself,—the lesson of lessons,—did the whole order of it teach the Israelites! They were in the utmost distress: there was but, as it were, a hair's breadth between them and death;

and in themselves they were perfectly helpless.—Then,

"The Lord said unto Moses, make thee a fiery Serpent, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live: and Moses made a Serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a Serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the Serpent of brass, he lived."

The cure was, you see, quite out of the course of nature. It could not be brought about in any of the diseased, but SUCH, AS FELT themselves bitten by the Serpents; nor in them, except they LOOKED, with a believing dependance on God, at the brazen Serpent erected on a pole. The disorder which they had, was of a very dangerous kind: but however dangerous the disorder, there was not an instance of any man's looking at the brazen Serpent, but he lived. How does our Lord teach us to apply all this! "As Moses lifted up the Serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Lord of glory was lifted up on a Cross for our sins: Without him we perish: In ourselves we are in a ruinous and perishing condition.—Did much people of Israel die by the bites of the Serpent?—So surely sin is that Serpent, that inbred Serpent, which has poisoned our vitals; and if it be not taken away, will consume us with a never-ending destruction. It will be to us the worm that dies not; and the fire that is not quenched.

What then is meant by being exhorted to believe on Jesus? What dispositions of mind does the

expression imply? And what are the true exercises of Faith? Could you desire a clearer practical account of these matters than this before us?—As the wounded Israelites beheld the brazen Serpent for their cure, so must we, feeling our perishing condition by sin, look with the eye of our souls to the cross of Christ, and view him, redeeming us from the curse, and from all the miseries of sin: And if in the temporal case, healing followed, so it does in the spiritual. You shall not perish, but have eternal life: And be it remembered, that the term life, does not here denote merely existence; though that, as opposed to annihilation, were an immense blessing;—it signifies all that NEW vigour and energy of soul, all those new principles, new tastes, and affections, of which a fallen creature becomes partaker by believing on his Saviour, and receiving him in all his offices. In this sense you shall have life eternal: In this world it shall commence in EARNESTS of the Spirit; and the everlasting fulness of it shall be hereafter.

Here then is the most important subject that can be conceived: Does not every other subject, in comparison of it, dwindle into insignificance? You are taught the way of obtaining eternal felicity,—the way of knowing and enjoying the true God. Moreover this way is laid open to rebels and sinners, who are in a perishing condition, who are under a sentence of wrath, and who otherwise have no means to help themselves.

There are three capital points before us:

1. The conviction of our perishing state.

2. The beholding of Christ crucified for our relief and redemption.

3. The happy effect of such looking; life eternal. May the Lord assist our weak understandings, that we may in the sequel of this discourse, comprehend and apply each of these considerations in a suitable manner!

1. The conviction of our perishing state.

This, this is a trying point indeed, yet absolutely necessary. What were the motives which inclined the poor wounded Israelite to turn his longing eyes to the brazen Serpent? What were the circumstances which rendered it necessary for him to do so?—The pain of his wound, the consciousness of imminent peril, the danger of a moment's delay, and, lastly, the sense he had of his own inability to relieve himself. All this is easily transferred to the SPIRITUAL case before us. You can scarce help being beforehand with me in apprehending the salutary doctrine. So easy, so obvious are the right inferences! Oh! that we were as ready, with as much feeling, and with as much alarm, to seek and to use the true remedy for our distempered souls, as we are, in temporal cases, for our sick bodies? Men have no inclination to consult a physician if they are well, or if they think themselves well: "They that be whole need not a Physician:" these words of the Divine Saviour are commonly applied on this occasion, and not more commonly than truly and justly. Assure yourselves then, that if you feel not your perishing state by nature, it is not possible for you to have so much as one believing look at Christ crucified. The story of his death may possibly be to you an affecting history: Its spiritual use you cannot fathom: Its supreme beauty you cannot relish: The wisdom and goodness of God

in it you cannot discover: Nor will it ever reach your heart, or be effectual to any one saving purpose, if, in your own eyes, you become not a lost, miserable, condemned sinner, and justly deserving God's wrath and eternal destruction. Fellow creatures, and fellow sinners! It is not enough to put by this matter in a cold, trifling, unfeeling, inapplicatory way: It is a bad symptom, when we are disposed to be satisfied with such general expressions as, "to be sure we are sinners: nobody is perfect:" when it offends our pride to hear the fundamental doctrine of the depravity of human nature enforced; and when we are glad to have such subjects turned to something else we can relish better. Let then every individual man and every individual woman, without a single exception, examine their own hearts closely by the holy law of God; and let not the examination cease till they are convinced of their helpless, undone state by nature; and let them pray fervently that so important a truth be brought home to their consciences; and then, and not till then, they will look aright at Jesus for salvation. Then will they understand that HE was lifted up on the cross, that, believing on him, they should not perish, but have everlasting life.—Brethren, if, with these views, you look at the Saviour, he will make you perceive, with a more exquisite sensibility than you ever perceived before, that, without him, you are in a state of alienation from God, and absolutely perishing, notwithstanding all you ever did, or all you can ever hope to do, to help yourselves: In a word, Jesus will show himself both able and willing to "save to the uttermost all that come to God by him;" yet it is an indispensable condition of his

salvation, that you should understand and feel yourselves to be in a state of death, if ever you hope to enjoy his precious eternal life.

It is the want of this conviction,—and I desire that the observation may be distinctly remembered, —that keeps so many back from Christ. It might make rivers of tears to run down one's cheeks to see men thus averse to their own happiness, and thus continue senseless and miserable slaves of Sin and Satan.—Would it not move a generous mind,—shall I say with pity, or indignation,—rather with both,—at the folly of the Israelites, supposing you had seen the brazen Serpent elevated on the pole, had known its healing virtue in various cases; and yet had beheld in a certain part of the camp a number of wretched beings, poisoned in their vitals, mourning in excruciating tortures, and hastening to their dissolution, suddenly turning away their eyes from the only object that could restore their health, as if afraid to be healed, and sullenly determined not to look that way, absurdly hoping still to be cured by some fanciful ways of their own!—How much more miserable is it for a number of souls to go on perishing in sin, yet hoping still to be saved, though averse to Christ Jesus, the only remedy!

He, indeed, who looks at Christ, sees him the incarnate God, the only begotten of the Father, begotten before the foundation of the world, yet made man of the substance of the Virgin Mary, and, as man, in that substance, agonizing under the load and curse,—not of his own sins, for he had no sin, —but of the sins of all mankind.

Brethren, it is in this act of looking at the Saviour,

and in seeing and receiving him in his proper offices, that the essence of true saving Faith consists. There may be some contention respecting the terms, which shall be thought best to describe the nature of a lively Faith: It may for instance, be doubted, whether believing in Christ, coming to Christ, receiving, or relying, or depending, on Christ, most adequately expresses that wise and happy determination of a contrite sinner, by which he wholly commits himself to the Lord Jesus Christ for pardon, peace, and every spiritual good; but Scripture will not allow us to doubt, that he who does so, is to be esteemed, on his very first coming to God by this living way, a child of God and an heir of eternal glory.

What! may any man rest ASSURED that, upon a direct application to the crucified Redeemer, God will immediately pardon his sins, and receive him into favour?

Keep the Text steadily in view; and let this question be answered by asking another:

Is there any good reason to doubt, whether a sight of the brazen Serpent, would have healed the envenomed wounds of the dying Israelites?

But Types and Emblems are SELDOM to be taken strictly.

Very true; neither ought they EVER to be explained away entirely.—They seldom hold, it is acknowledged, if we descend to minute particulars; but this instructive emblem would fail in its leading and most essential circumstance, if an eager, longing, sight of the Saviour on the cross, did not perfectly heal the most inveterate spiritual malady.

Why then, it will be asked, do not these blessed

effects take place more frequently than they do, and with less wavering, and less distress of conscience, than what happens to many?

Unbelief is at the bottom of this great evil. Depraved man, even where his best interests are immediately concerned, opposes a holy God. He is commanded to believe; and he determines to doubt: The Devil powerfully supports him in his folly and his obstinacy; and the awakened sinner is often long kept in clouds and darkness. When he manfully fights with the corruptions of his nature, when he cheerfully co-operates with the good Spirit of God in subduing them, and particularly, when he industriously avails himself of all the Scripture-rules and helps for the strengthening of his faith, he is much sooner made happy; that is, he is much sooner established in the truth and the comfort of the Gospel; and much sooner does the Spirit of God witness with his spirit that he is a child of God.

But I perceive that several are still disposed to ask whether there be not in this business some danger of presumption;—some danger of believing too soon?

No danger of this sort in a truly humbled sinner; no danger of this sort, where the bite of the Serpent has been keen, where the venom has penetrated the vitals, and lastly, where the man understands the mortal nature of the malady, deeply mourns over it, and would gladly be cured.—Such a man wants not only to live, but to BE IN HEALTH: He wishes for power to perform the actions of a healthy, spiritual, man.—There is no danger of HIS faith being unfruitful: According to his talents, and opportunities, he will bring forth, thirty, sixty, or a hundred fold.

Yet there is such a thing as presumption in the

use of the blessed Saviour; and a dreadful thing it is. This happens, when a hypocrite pretends to believe in Christ for his cure, and is not, in the least, sensible of the nature of his malady.—He feels no pain from the bite of the Serpent Sin, nor would he fear the secret effects of its poison, if he had not heard that death was likely to be the consequence: THAT circumstance alarms him; and he thinks it right to use some means of preventing mischief. But mark well; the remedy of which we speak, cures none but those who FEEL their disease.

To tell a man, however, that his salvation depends on his bringing forth good works, or that he must use diligence, and labour hard to produce good works before Christ will be willing to save him, is not the way to cure an antinomian, hypocritical disposition.—Nor must a teacher of the Gospel pervert sound and wholesome doctrine, because the doctrine may possibly be abused. Corruptions of the right Faith of the Gospel are not best withstood, by inculcating the opposite Errors, but by distinctly stating and enforcing the Truth.

So in this instance.—Show a man that he is utterly corrupt, and cannot, in his present natural state, please God by any of his works; and at the same time, show him that those, who in true humility apply to Jesus for pardon, peace, and for holy dispositions, will, in no wise, be cast out, but will receive above what they can ask or think; and it may please God, soon to open his eyes, and cause him to have joy in believing. Then he will "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing*:" Then the tree will be good, and so will its fruit.

* Col. i. 10.

These considerations may serve to show you, brethren, what is meant by the saving faith of the Gospel; and how it may and ought to be sure and stedfast; though in many true believers, it is weak. —'But these should be strengthened.'

Let them, therefore, remember the sweet conclusion of St. John in the fifth chapter of his first Epistle: "These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye MAY KNOW that ye have eternal life."—— Again! If indeed God hath given to the world eternal life, and "this life is in his Son," believe on this Son for life; and in believing find peace. God forbid! that I, or that any one should ever say, "Be not anxious respecting good works," when the Scriptures declare that all the redeemed servants of God are "zealous of good works." It is their principle to place no dependance, before God, on their works; but it is also their principle to let "their light shine before men."—Whilst others talk and boast of their good deeds, these Christians are fruitful in the performance of them.

How can any one maintain that merely to believe in Jesus as a real Prophet of God makes a man a true Christian believer? Yet do we often hear it said, that "belief in the mission of Christ, comprehends every requisite of Christian faith."—Brethren, Nicodemus professed such a belief. You will find in the beginning of the chapter of the Text, that Nicodemus was rationally convinced, that no man could do those miracles which Jesus did, except God was with him. Alas! You may believe this, and many historical points of the Gospel besides, and yet have no true faith in Christ; not even know what it is; and it is

our ignorance of what Christian faith is in its true exercise, that keeps many persons in their sins.

If you had been in the camp of Israel, would you not have known what was meant by LOOKING at the Serpent? Would you have thought it sufficient to have formed some notions only of the object placed upon the pole? Of the sort of brass, for instance, of which it was made? Whether it was hollow, or solid? Whether it was really brass or something else gilded, or how long the pole was which sustained it. Oh! if you had been bitten and had FELT yourself perishing, you would have desired to LOOK for your own cure. See you not then,—is it possible it can be made plainer, does not the Son of God by the similitude in hand, point it out to us,—that he, and he only, is a true believer, who looks to the crucified Jesus, and puts his whole trust in him, for his eternal salvation? There must be a coming to him, an embracing of him, a taking hold of him for ourselves: and we cannot do this, except we be stripped of all hope from any other means. The least allowance of hope from any thing of ourselves spoils this whole method of cure. Look well to yourselves, brethren, that the worm of self-righteousness eat not up all your religion, and leave you neither root nor branch. We must be stripped of all self-dependance; and when we are so stripped, we must turn to the Cross, with both an eager and a steady eye. It is there alone that Divine Justice is satisfied: there, therefore, we are to obtain peace and rest to our consciences; there we are to say, we have righteousness and strength.

But you hope that your repentance and your good meanings and sincere desires, together with

Christ's merits, will save you: Is not this thought lurking in the hearts of many? Know, you must look wholly at Christ, or not at all: The crucified Jesus, the Holy One of Israel, is a pure, unmixed Saviour. You do not know what true repentance is, if you thus,—as you evidently do,—make a merit of your repentance: and, as to your good meanings and sincere desires; alas! alas! what shall I say to convince you of this most important, yet disagreeable and offensive truth,—that you have no such thing in your nature. To be brought to have a relish for what is good, to see a beauty in holiness, to be established in a course of sincere obedience to God, is the end and upshot of this business. It is the very issue in which the healing virtue of Christ's blood must terminate.

Sincere obedience is, in short, that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord: This is its true character. Now, if any of you suppose that you have this in yourselves to begin your religion with,—if you are already gotten to the uppermost step of the ladder that reaches to Heaven, you can have no occasion for Christ. He did not come to save the sincere, or the upright, or the righteous,—Scripture words, which all mean much the same, but he came "to justify the ungodly, to save the lost, to quicken the dead." If you are not of this class, you must make the best of your boasted qualifications and attainments, and try, whether this pretended sincerity be not at bottom, pride and self-deception; try, whether, it can, in the end, deliver you from everlasting destruction.

Ah! brethren, the lesson is irksome, but it is of the utmost moment, and must be learned. It is

my bounden duty repeatedly to inform you, that you must be brought to KNOW and FEEL yourselves "by nature children of wrath;"—not sincere; not upright; not possessed of good meanings or good desires. The curse of curses,—the self-righteous principle in the heart, must be subdued; and, when you are thoroughly convinced of your unworthiness, you will have nothing of your own to plead; you will lay aside the Pharisee, and take up the Publican, and cry, "God me merciful to me a sinner!"

Think you it hard to be thus forced to judge meanly of yourselves, and your many deservings?—Then,—and not till then,—begin to reason against the Divine Justice and the sentence of the law, when you know all the mysteries of God's glorious character and kingdom. Then, when you are shot up to such an unmeasurable height of wisdom, as to be fit judges of HIS proceedings; when you can measure how much evil there is in sin; and how little harm would result to the whole System of Creation, if the Univeral Lord should dispense with the breach of his laws, or even punish his Creatures in a less degree than He threatens to do; when you have settled these things, then rejudge Divine Justice, censure the sentence of the Almighty; and tell the Most High, that your petty sins deserve not such treatment.

But, as you scarce have yet come to all this knowledge, and will probably find the glass of your life emptied of its sand, before you have finished your calculations on these subjects, it will be your wisdom, in the mean time, to attend rather to things, of which you MAY be judges. Look around you to plain matters of fact. These show the world to be

in a fallen, perishing state: Sin and misery overspread it: Neither will you deny, that if you had the management of this world's affairs, such and such sins should not have been punished so severely, as you find they are punished in the course of God's providence. For example, God often punishes extravagance, and libertines, with want, with diseases, and with untimely death. If you had been left the judges of these matters, you would not have thought it should be so.—

So when you come into the next world, and see the lake of fire, that burneth with brimstone, the torment of the wicked, may not you find yourself mistaken, just in the same manner?

But look within; there is a voice within us called Conscience. And as far as it is rightly informed, it will always speak for God. It points out a God, supremely to be reverenced; and as St. Paul tells us, in the first chapter to the Romans, it condemns men, so that they are left without excuse, for their idolatrous and unworthy treatment of their Maker. Hear the voice of the law written in your heart, of which the same St. Paul speaks in the next chapter. Does it not tell you of justice, of truth, of mercy, of equity, of a thousand good things, of which you have not one? Must you not then plead guilty, in spite of all the evasions you can make? And, unhappily, we are but too ingenious in the invention of evasions. Must you not then own yourselves in the situation of condemned, helpless criminals, before a righteous judge?—And further; if you ever come to know aright, the mystery of iniquity within you, you will feel your very natures to be "earthly, sensual, devilish." What means that

listless indifference about prayer, about the knowledge and love of God, about heavenly things?—What a damp does the very mention of such things in company strike on your minds! But how alert, how lively are you in things of the world, and in any matter that does not lead you to God! It would carry me a great way to point out the various thousand proofs of man's fallen perishing state. Indeed, if we were not disposed to shut our eyes against the plainest truths, when they are mortifying to our pride, we have within us, in abundance, proofs of man's fallen, miserable condition, being such as the Bible represents it; and hence, as our Lord observes to Nicodemus, in the discourse, of which the Text is a part, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Men may pretend what they please, but God knows, and they themselves may come to know, with horror at last, that the real cause of their aversion and opposition to Scripture doctrine is an internal, rooted, hatred to holiness; and that such are the workings of in-dwelling sin, that depraved creatures never fail to prefer any kind of religious notions, which allow them to retain a good opinion of themselves.—But, let me beseech You, whom the first head of this discourse may more particularly concern, to weigh the subject most seriously, in self-examination and prayer, till you feel its truth and its importance.

2. The conviction of our depraved state, was our first head; and it is so weighty a matter, and so connected with all that follows, that, already we have encroached upon the second head, and may,

therefore, now be more brief in considering it,—namely,—the beholding of Christ crucified, for our relief and redemption.

This will teach us what is meant by the exercise of the true faith of the Gospel, a thing most necessary to be rightly apprehended, though, often, slightly, or untruly represented, and, in fact, misunderstood by those who feel not their need of Christ. It implies in it, that consciousness of misery, and that desert of everlasting destruction, of which we have been speaking. It carries the soul immediately to Christ for life and salvation; it directs the attention to the crucified Saviour; it beholds a holy God, as fixing his beloved Son to the Cross, that the Son might make satisfaction to Divine Justice for man's sin: It sees sin infinitely hateful, yet completely pardoned and done away in that most astonishing, and most glorious of all transactions.

Beware, Brethren, lest you content yourselves with merely good NOTIONS of Christian faith, instead of faith itself, considered as a humble, holy, practical determination of the soul. Our Lord used no flattering, or complimentary expressions to Nicodemus on the goodness of the religious principles of that "Master of Israel;" No; though Nicodemus had all his life the HISTORICAL faith before mentioned, Jesus thought it necessary to lead him to a right sense of the necessity of the New Birth, and to the living faith which we are describing: And let me exhort all who, in the consciousness of their lost condition by nature, truly long for Christ's salvation, but think it presumption for them in their simple state, to call him their Saviour; let me exhort all such to come nearer to their

Redeemer, to their high priest, their king, and their prophet.—He is your object: Look with a steady, earnest, persevering attention; and if you cannot yet discern your Saviour so distinctly, as to apply his remedies suitably to your distemper,—continue to look for him in his ordinances, till, in the light of the Spirit, you can behold him with comfort. Truly humbled, awakened, sinners, who equally wish to be free from the dominion, as well as from the penalty of sin, and to whom sin is an intolerable burden, are the very persons with whom he delights to dwell. Guard against Satan's fiery darts, and your own self-righteous, unbelieving, nature. It may seem a poor direction to say, "Look unto me, and be saved;" Natural reason would rather say, Do some great work, and then God will take notice of you; nevertheless, this is GOD's way, and it must be your's: It seems strange to nature, that to look at a piece of brass, a lump of inert metal, should be the means of healing a wound. Certain chirurgical applications might be thought better adapted to cases of that kind. But, if God commands, there is no room for hesitation. It is just so it spiritual things; and if you will patiently look to Jesus, and go on, trusting in him, because he bids you to do so, you shall not be disappointed. The poor Israelites, though just expiring,—if, with languid look, they caught but a sight of the brazen Serpent on the pole, recovered from the deadly effects of the poisonous bites, and lived.—

Apply this, in your last extremity, when you have been struggling, perhaps in great darkness of mind, to save yourselves, and are almost reduced to despair, and you shall find Christ a Saviour indeed.

And it is not only to weak ones of the good Shepherd's flock, but to the strong also, that I would say the same thing. There is none other that can "deliver after this sort*:" There is none but Jesus, who, even unto death, can heal and bestow life. He, then, MUST be our Saviour.—

Brethren, let us all often think of our approaching dissolution. Death cannot, even in the case of the youngest of us, be FAR off: Let us, therefore, familiarize to our minds the awful thought. Ah! which of us then will dare to plead how good he has been? The purest saint on earth, has, daily and hourly, need of forgiveness, and will need it to his dying moments. Let, then, the prayer of each individual be; "May I be favoured with a view of God's pardoning love," and, with good old Simeon, I shall say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."—Now, precisely, as will be our need at the hour of death, so is it, in reality, at the present moment. In this sense, therefore, we should die daily, and live lives of faith on Jesus.

3. But where are the true Christian works of the believer? Where is that holiness, without which, no man, it is said, shall see the Lord?—

It was in the third part of this discourse, that we were to consider the precious fruits of looking to the Saviour with the eye of a living faith. The dying Israelite is restored to health by a look at the brazen Serpent; the perishing sinner, by believing on the Son of Man, lifted up and crucified, obtains eternal LIFE.—Every one knows what is meant by ETERNAL; but the significant term LIFE, is not, I fear, always rightly understood. It refers, not

* Dan. iii. 29.

merely to an eternal existence in Heaven, but also to that happy change of state, which, even while we remain in this world, takes place, in a sound conversion of heart. By believing on his Saviour, in the sense so often explained, the pardoned sinner passes from death unto life; he becomes a new creature: old things are past away, behold, all things are become new *.

Wonderful indeed is the effect of true and lively faith, or rather of the healing virtue of the blood of Jesus duly applied to the wounded spirit of a man firmly believing in the efficacy of the remedy he is about to use. The conscience is relieved: True joy and solid peace take possession of the heart: At this fire the most stubborn lusts and tempers melt. In this, and in no other way, you mortify the whole body of sin. You are thus brought to a new view of God, as your Father; and you walk before him in humble reverence, and yet in spiritual dignity, serving him as Sons, with love; not as slaves, with terror. Heavenly things become your delight: The love of the world,—that great idol,—is subdued. You learn to forgive, and to love all, and to have patience with all. Neither will your passage through the sea of life be very stormy: He, the same Jesus, rebukes the winds and bids the sea be still, and they obey him,—but remember Heaven is your Port.

This is but a very slight sketch of the blessed effects of a spiritual view of Christ crucified; and yet several may say, I find them not.—I ask, do you believe on Christ, for the express purpose, and in the hope and expectation of experiencing them? See to

* 2 Cor. v. 17.

your faith, that it be sincere, and lively, and then its operation will be efficient, and its effects genuine.

Do others say, formerly we knew something of these things; but it is not with us now, as heretofore. —A very possible case.—Perhaps the good seed sown has been choked by the cares of the world:— Probably you have thought yourselves secure, and have looked too much at the world: Look less at it; and look more at Christ, till He shine upon you, till He expel your darkness, and heal your backslidings.

And if there be any here, who to this hour are strangers to true religion, lose not a moment more in negligence, in trifling, in vain and pernicious amusements, neither in what are equally dangerous, in worldly cares or ambitious pursuits:—The Text itself is a summary of the Gospel: It comprehends all the parts of Christ's religion, and these are always in close connexion with each other, forming one consistent WHOLE: Therefore,

May the good Spirit of God apply the precious passage of Scripture to your hearts and consciences. —As the first, by not following on, sometimes become the last, so likewise by prayer and diligence and perseverance, the last may be found the first.

A word of application to all sorts of persons.

I have laid before you, as plainly and as clearly as I could, the only principles by which any good works can be performed in a manner acceptable to God, and with a spirit of charity, vigour and godly zeal.—If then it be a great truth, that no works deserve the name of good, except such as flow from a lively faith in Christ Jesus, will it not be the duty of every human creature to attend closely to the

doctrines of the New Testament, to ponder them seriously; and to read, hear, and digest such instructions and exhortations as, through the blessing of God, may assist your understandings, and regulate your judgments, in these very weighty concerns?

Brethren, if, with a humble, docile temper of mind, and with a spirit of prayer and of waiting patiently on God, who is ever more ready to hear, than we to ask, you receive this advice, you will not only learn what may truly comfort and sanctify your own souls, but what also will be to you, an animating spring to the proper discharging of every relative duty with cheerfulness and alacrity.

The real Gospel is not understood amongst us; and it is often despised, or at least neglected. We hear much said concerning reforms, improvements, and, in general, concerning doing good. Can we wonder that various attempts for these purposes should fail, or little come of them, while the only principles of genuine good works are kept out of sight.

There is, in the art of being holy,—if the expression may be allowed,—a mystery or a secret. I have explained this to-day in the best manner I was able. It consists in the knowledge and the application of the real Gospel of Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXIII.

ST. PETER'S COURAGE; AND HIS WANT OF FAITH.

Matthew, xiv. 28.

And Peter answered him, and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.

THE whole story, of which these words are a part, is related with great simplicity, and is full of instruction. The nature of faith in the Redeemer, the infirmity with which it is apt to be attended, the patience, goodness, and power of Jesus, are the important subjects, which it comprehends and teaches. Not only the leading parts of the transaction before us, but all the circumstances which accompanied it, had a very evident tendency to exercise and improve the Disciples of our Lord in the practice of real godliness: And if so, we certainly ought to look on the surprising miracle of St. Peter's walking on the water, as something more than a mere evidence of the power and authority of Christ. The narrative, considered in that view, is indeed a record of vast consequence, but, besides this,—unless we think that we have nothing to do with any of the affairs which concerned the Apostles,—we should also attend diligently to the practical truths, which are inseparably connected with the facts related. To

receive, to study, to apply these truths to our own case, will, on inquiry, be found to be our proper business, as much as it was that of the Apostles.

Indeed, in these profane days, under one idle pretence or other, the use of almost the whole Bible is quite taken away.—This is not overstated: And, if those, who are continually objecting to the good old way of interpreting Scripture, considered the consequences of their bold innovations, they might see, that it was not overstated: Nay, they could not but see that their mode of proceeding leaves hardly to any part of the Holy Writ its entire weight and authority.

For example; It is very fashionable to set aside, as useless or obscure, the types and figures of the Old Testament, and most of the Jewish history: However, when men speak so, they affect perhaps, to cry up the beauties of the New Testament. Now bring them to the New Testament, and then the Epistles of St. Paul are too difficult, or too doctrinal, or they are exceedingly harsh; and because St. Peter says there are some things in them hard to be understood, these same men would represent them as impossible to be understood, and as if that was the character of all the writings of that great Apostle. Then, in regard to the book of the Revelations,—none but a madman, it is supposed, would meddle with that.

Thus, there is not much left but the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles. And it is not unlikely, but that most of the instruction contained in the latter is supposed to be confined to the Apostles days. The great business of the Acts of the Apostles, is to display the power and the operation of the Holy

Ghost, whose office of Guide, of Comforter, and of Sanctifier, is so precious to all, who truly fear God, that I want words to describe the inestimable treasures which are to be found in this part of Sacred History.

But it seems that, in our days, we have little or nothing to do with the Holy Spirit. He may occasionally assist well-disposed persons by suggesting good thoughts, and strengthening their pious resolutions; but in a Christian country, where all men are baptized, and believe the Gospel, his operation, it is supposed, cannot be necessary for the conversion of men's souls: Neither does any person, now, it will be said, expect to be endowed with the supernatural power of working miracles.

If there be any portion of the Sacred Writings, which in particular remains respected by the higher and more polite orders of men, it is the four Gospels. Yet, even from the miracles, of which these are so full, I fear, we are forbidden to draw any powerful or comfortable advantages, lest, forsooth, we fall into some conclusions, which may be deemed, strained, and whimsical. And, further, whatever we find in them of the vital doctrines of Christianity, such as that of a NEW BIRTH, in the third chapter of St. John, or of a UNION with Christ, in the sixth chapter of the same Evangelist, must be explained away, and lowered, till all life and energy be lost, and till every thing that is spiritual and peculiarly Christian, evaporates and disappears.

It is not to be denied, that there have been fanciful interpreters of Scripture, who have made an impertinent use of various parts of the Old

and New Testament; but if these commentators have, at the same time, treated the sacred pages with reverence and a serious godly spirit, and have advanced nothing on the whole, but what was agreeable to the Word of God, and might be solidly proved from other parts of Scripture,—who would not infinitely rather be in their condition, than in that of the proudest critics, to whose conduct I have just alluded?—In the first case, there is real Gospel-food, on which the soul may feed, though it be prepared in a taste somewhat fantastical;—in the latter, all is emptiness, affectation, and vanity.

Let no man, however, mistake my meaning.—I would never wish to undertake the defence of any interpretations, or inferences, which will not stand the test of a reasonable examination: But then I must add, that no man is likely to give revealed truths a reasonable examination, except those who are poor and contrite in spirit, who feel their need of a Saviour, and whose hearts stand in awe of God's word —Men of proud, worldly, profane minds, through the want of that humble, docile frame of soul, which is an essential preparative for the reception of the rich benefits of the Gospel, will always suppose that to be fantastical, or in some way objectionable, which is not so in the smallest degree.—For, as St. Augustine saith, "Philosophers scorn to learn of Christ, because he is meek and lowly in heart, and though he is indeed higher than all honour, and glorifies his true disciples, yet no men can be his disciples, who are high in their own eyes."—Who then, Brethren, is there among you that feareth the Lord? Who is present in this congregation, that can bring

his mind, with a child-like simplicity, to listen to the instruction, with which the blessed Jesus has condescended to favour us in this striking passage of St. Matthew's Gospel? May his good Spirit be with us, and prepare our hearts to attend to his own word: And may he dispose us all, not to rest contented with barely understanding the narrative, or with trifling useless criticisms about it, but to search after substantial saving knowledge, and to treasure it up in our memories for practical purposes!

We shall go back as far as the twenty-second verse of the fourteenth chapter. "Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away." It was not agreeable, we may suppose, to the disciples, to be deprived of the Saviour's company. But he meant, ere long, that they should be deprived for ever of his bodily presence in this world, and that they should live like sheep among wolves, and be supported only by his spiritual and invisible assistance. Then they must live by faith, and not by sight. And is not this the very life to which real Christians in all ages are called?—He, who knew all things, knew what a trial his disciples would be exposed to that very night, in which he sent them away; and how much heavier it would seem because of his absence.—Yet he, all compassion as he is, would yet have it so. Faith deserves not the name,—it is not faith,—if it rest not on the veracity of the Divine Word; but when it does so rest, and implicitly,—it fails not, by exercises of this kind, to grow strong and vigorous, and

to bring forth its proper fruits of patient obedience: and moreover, in this way, the Old Man* with all his members of corruption is subdued more and more.

You, who follow Christ, and would wish to be continually enjoying him most sensibly without a Cross, you see what even this first little circumstance of the story teaches you, namely, to bear the Saviour's constraint with patient submission, and to give up your own will and judgment to his, in expectation of the happy event, and in a due reverence for his will and authority.—

"And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray."—The Son of God wished for private converse with his Father, as well as for an opportunity of trying his disciples. If he then, who was without sin, cultivated the spirit of private prayer, how much more should we, who are so full of it! Secret prayer is the life and spring of all duties and of all growth in grace: if it be neglected, it will be impossible for us to live close to God.

"But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary." This is the trial of their faith, to which Jesus intended them to be exposed. It would be natural enough for corrupt flesh and blood to murmur and repine. "How hard is it, that our Master should suffer us to be thus distressed! He might, at least, have afforded us the comfort of his presence."

Under cross providences and disagreeable circumstances, it is natural enough for man's proud

* Rom. vi. 6. Eph. iv. 22. Col. iii. 9.

and rebellious nature to repine, and think it hard that he should be so severely treated, when it is so very easy for God to remove afflictions, if he pleased. We forget, or need yet to learn, that every thing short of Hell, is to sinners a mercy from a Holy God; and that he of very faithfulness causes his dearest servants to be troubled.

In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea: for even that furious element knew her Creator, and at his word, "her liquid pavement was strong as adamant." This was another discovery of the Divine Glory, in addition to what they had seen of the loaves just before. We are well repaid for any crosses and delays of God to deliver us, if we are in the issue brought to know something more of the power and majestic glory of Jesus. But, at first, they knew him not; they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. Nor is this an unusual case: The true followers and servants of Christ, are frequently frightened, even at those dealings of their gracious Master, which, in reality, are most distinguished mercies. The very things they have wished for, and perhaps, have long prayed for, when they arrive, are terrible to their minds. The reason is, the eyes of their understanding are not opened to comprehend aright their own state, and the Lord, in great kindness, is leading the blind by a way that they know not*. They themselves know not what will best promote their progress in the Christian life, nor are they in a frame of spirit suited for the reception of that, which infinite wisdom, and infinite

* Isa. xlii. 16.

compassion, sees to be good for them; and therefore they are alarmed, and they murmur.—Nay, those very precious teachings of the Holy Ghost, which are intended effectually to guide awakened and distressed souls, and to bring them to a comfortable dependance on the Saviour, how apt are the best Christians, on many occasions, through the ignorance and perverseness of corrupt nature, to misconstrue and look on in a very formidable light?—For example; We pray to be made humble; and we do this very sincerely, as far as the END to be obtained is concerned; but are we thoroughly disposed to submit to the MEANS necessary to be used for this purpose? Or rather, are we not often ready to quarrel with almost every part both of religious doctrine, and of religious experience, when we find in fact, that all the divine dispensations respecting fallen man, are ordered in such a way, as to show us our own sinfulness? This salutary lesson meets us every where; but our pride is hurt by it, and we forget that the humility, for which we prayed, must be grounded on a clear view of this very wickedness of the human heart, which we are so averse to feel and to confess.

This whole passage of Scripture, from which the Text is taken, is peculiarly instructive to young beginners in the school of Christ.—Let them consider themselves as in the place of the disciples, who were, at that time, far from being well informed in the principles of Christianity; and let them view their Saviour as now dealing with them, as he did with his disciples of old; and they cannot fail to

derive both instruction and consolation from a diligent study of the narrative.—

But straightway, Jesus spake unto them, saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid." This, Brethren, is the way of the compassionate Jesus; of him, who came to save that which was lost. To speak a word in due season to "him that is weary," is the way of him, who "breaketh not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax*." These are the Scriptural descriptions of Christ, and you shall sooner see heaven and earth pass away, than he shall ever cease to act in his true character. He delighteth to show mercy; but it is to those, who are sensible of their need of mercy, and who earnestly cry for it:—He invites the sinner to peace and rest; but it is that sinner who is heavy laden, and ready to sink under his burden.

The disciples were overcome with a groundless terror: they thought they saw an apparition. He, who well knew human nature, and all its infirmities, felt that this was not the moment to trifle with their apprehensions; and therefore, immediately he discovers himself to them, and lets them know plainly who he is; and by this means at once turns their fears into joy.

In the very same way he treats all faithful, seeking souls:—Do you belong to that happy class? Does conscience return a direct and favourable answer to this question? Then you may rest assured, that however oppressed you may be with imaginary tertors, or with violent temptations, God will not "suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able."

* Isaiah, xlii. 3.

—You will find God in Christ to be a "strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall *."

Our blessed Lord was then walking on the sea: At this day he walks invisible by his Spirit in the midst of the churches. But his nature is still the same, and still he acts in the same manner. Does he see a proud, presumptuous professor of his holy religion, abusing the precious doctrines of grace, to the purposes of sin? He has in store for him a dreadful scourge, perhaps a succession of dreadful scourges; yea, and at last hell itself, if he repent not,—if he persist in filling up the measure of his iniquity.

On the other hand, does he see a fearful, humble soul, who gladly sits at his feet and learns, and would eagerly serve his Master, if he did but know the way?—He may permit such a one, for a while, to be entangled, and confounded through ignorance, to be dismayed by a night of terrors, and misapprehensions, and even to be oppressed by that roaring lion, who walks about seeking whom he may devour; but remember, He who rebuked the winds and the sea, will by and by, rebuke all the powers of darkness. The distresses of his servants shall not remain an instant after they had served his own holy and gracious purposes.

This is a very comfortable truth; and the full persuasion of it greatly tends to quiet secret murmurings and discontents: Therefore, accustom yourselves, in

* Isaiah, xxv. 4.

every event, and in every prospect and expectation of events, to rely entirely on his wisdom and goodness. Be assured, that his meaning is to bring strength out of weakness; that those who are his feeble servants, who are "babes in Christ," uninformed, unexperienced, should grow in true obedience and mortify the deeds of the body more and more.

Take notice further; If during the Christian's passage through troubled seas, the storm should rise to such an height as to threaten to overwhelm the tempted soul, Jesus will instantly rebuke the wind and the sea, and will turn his mourning into joy: And this is a point of consolation well tried by every Saint of God, in every age, from St. Paul to Augustine, and from Augustine to Luther, and from Luther to the present day. I mention these three men particularly, who lived in times very distant from each other, because I could easily show,—if the subject before us did not call our attention to different objects,—how each of these holy men, found, in his own experience, what I am now saying to be true.—Trust, therefore, ye seeking souls, in the Lord, and commit yourselves in the most trying seasons to his care: joy and gladness will soon be the issue.

Observe what a generous effect our Lord's presence and his comfortable words had on the mind of Peter. "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come to thee on the water."—There appears here in Peter, something of the very boldness, zeal, affection, and activity, which the Spirit of adoption bestows on believers. He proffered, indeed, to do more than was barely necessary; yet was the proffer void of

presumption; and it originated in very solid principles. I do not say this on slight grounds; for, mark his principles. He waits for the word of command; he does not undertake the dangerous experiment in his own strength; and lastly, that which kindles this spirit in him, is the comfortable presence and kind words of Jesus.

Are the hearts of any, who now listen to these observations, warmed by the example of Peter? And would you know what it is to feel generous, affectionate, and noble motives and principles of duty? It must be the love of Christ that constrains you. Seek him and his kingdom; and meditate on his love, till he show you its true nature, and, by his Spirit, convince you both of its real existence and its practical influence,—in one word,—till the "Love of God be shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost*."

Alas! how many, who call themselves Christians, neither know nor care, in any degree, for this love to Christ, nor are anxious to possess the dispositions which flow from it! Fancying, that their general, cold, assent to revealed religion is the real faith of the Gospel; and believing little or nothing concerning affections wrought by the Holy Ghost,—they move heavily in all their religious course. How shall I express myself so as to hit the truth, and not give offence? Shall I say they are all prudence and caution; or tell them at once, that their hearts are selfish and void of love, and, in their present state, incapable of the least glow of affection towards their Saviour?

* Rom. v. 5.

But many of this class of nominal Christians have nevertheless a very high opinion of themselves. Will they then forgive me, if I hint to them that I most seriously fear they perform their duties merely on slavish principles, to purchase Heaven, and that they take particular care to do no more good works, as they call them, than what they suppose to be absolutely necessary for this purpose?

Brethren, hints and insinuations do not become such a subject as this. Inexcusable should I be, if I did not say plainly, No man will ever arrive at Heaven on these principles and motives. No man will arrive at Heaven, as long as the whole frame of his mind is void of that love, of that charity, without which nothing else is of value in religion. Then observe,—Love measures not duty by ounces and scruples: but proceeds in true generosity of spirit, and with the most pleasant and delightful sensations. You know what in common life, this generosity and these sensations mean, when they are called forth by the mutual regards of sincere and zealous friends, —at least those persons do, the ingenuous part of whose nature is not entirely eaten up by love of the world.—Now religion does not require new faculties, but new principles and motives. When we say, that there must be an entire change of the whole man; or, agreeable to our Lord's declaration, that we "must be born again," we do not mean that men are to be no longer human beings, or that they are to be without affections; No—Our blessed Lord himself was in all things made like unto his brethren *, sin only excepted. The affections, then,

* Heb. ii. 17.

are not to be extinguished, but to be placed on different objects: Those noble, generous, active feelings and sentiments of love and regard, which, in unconverted men, are often produced by improper, and even by profane objects, are the very ideas, which, in the NEW CREATURE *, always accompany acceptable works and obedience. Perhaps it might be more accurate, if we were disposed to enter into metaphysical niceties, to describe the latter ideas as SIMILAR to the former, rather than as precisely the SAME: But be that as it may, the important distinction is this, that in the converted or NEW man, these operations and exercises of the mind, in whatever they really consist, now respect God and the Saviour, the Creator instead of the creature. These affections or dispositions the holy Scriptures concisely express by the love of God; and let it be remembered, that men of the world constantly represent them as enthusiastical or fanatical.

Brethren, You, who have these affections, cultivate them more and more; You, who seek for them, look to Christ by faith for those delightful views of him by which they are excited; and you, who despise them,—learn to repent: At present you neither love God nor his Christ. Possibly you may have some regard for an imaginary God or Christ but search the Scriptures with diligent prayers; be assured God is not to be mocked; what a man soweth, that shall he also reap†; and if you are to be saved at all, it must be in God's way. The heart must be changed: the affections must be set on things above.—All the great things of which we have read

* 2 Cor. v. 17. † Gal. vi. 7.

or heard, and which ever have been done by holy men, proceeded from the principle of love: the cold, slavish, self-righteous principle is barren in its effects, and leaves no marks of its power, but superstition, formality, and worldly-mindedness.—

How pleasing to Jesus is that affectionate spirit which honours him by an implicit confidence!—And Jesus said to Peter, "Come." And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. If he was "a bold man, who first ventured on a piece of timber into the ocean, what was he who ventured on the water itself?" 'Tis faith, 'tis faith that triumphs thus.—Peter has now a commission from the divine word; and as he believes, so he finds: the water supports him so long as his faith lasts.

But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; that is, his faith failed. His faith was strong enough to carry him through the miraculous trial, while the wind was calm and the sea smooth, but not so, when the weather became tempestuous and the waters troubled. He limited the sovereign authority of his Master, and did not consider, that the same divine energy, which had supported him in one state of the sea, could do the same in another; and therefore,—"he began to sink." By faith alone, he had hold of the supporting power of Jesus, and the moment his faith weakens, the moment he loses his firm grasp,—he begins to sink of course.

And, beginning to sink, he cried, "Lord, save me!" There was even in his cries, SOME exercise of faith towards Christ. When we feel faith weak, let prayer be fervent, and the Lord will be near, as he was in this case.

"And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

If Peter had not had some faith, he would not have ventured on the water at all; and if his faith had been sufficiently strong, he would not have sunk. Indeed, this whole story is so particularly calculated, in the most obvious manner, to teach us the nature of a true and lively faith in Jesus, and to exercise us to dependance on him, and to patience under his hand, as well as to enlarge our views of his power, wisdom and beneficence; and, moreover, it conveys instruction of a kind so exactly corresponding to the general doctrines of the Gospel, that I do not wonder that all godly men, in contemplating the various circumstances of the narrative, feel themselves informed and encouraged to derive from it much spiritual use and consolation. —Those only, who themselves are strangers to the divine life, and suspect, as enthusiastic, every thing that would teach them how to live by faith in Jesus, will think it strange that such consequences should be drawn from what they have been accustomed to consider as only a few plain and simple facts.

"And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased."

Yes: The toils and labours, which are undertaken in religion without Jesus, are heavy indeed; they are unpleasant and unfruitful. But his presence gives a calm and serenity, and mountains flow down before him *.

"Then they, that were in the ship, came and worshipped him, saying,—Of a truth thou art the

* Isaiah, lxiv. 1.

Son of God,"—impressed, it should seem, with awful ideas of his majesty and power. And may we, who have been considering this great lesson of Peter walking on the sea, be deeply affected in a similar way! May our understandings be enlightened, so as to comprehend the important truths it teaches, and may our hearts be effectually inclined to obey them!

For this purpose, under the direction of that blessed Spirit, without whose efficacious help all our labours, and all our hopes are vain, I would now, in conclusion, take advantage of the impression which I trust this story of St. Peter may have made on the minds of the more serious part of this congregation.

Permit me then, in a very few words, to preach closely to the hearts of every individual, the pure Gospel of Christ: And may you be led to consider attentively what the real nature of that Gospel is; and may your ideas of the same be made more distinct and lively, by the consideration of the very instructive emblem, which has been the subject of this discourse!

Brethren, We are all miserable sinners, who have lost the right road to bliss, and have made to ourselves crooked paths, in which, whosoever goeth shall not know peace. Neither have we any will or disposition to set ourselves in the right way, or any skill or strength to support ourselves in making a right progress;—No,—not for a moment. He that has not learned this lesson, must begin to learn afresh: In religion he knows nothing yet aright. He may he a philosopher, a Mahometan, a Pagan,

a Christian by name and profession; but he cannot stir a single step in the Christian life, nor know any one thing respecting the same to a good purpose, till he has learnt with St. Paul, that in himself, that is, in his flesh, "dwelleth no good thing." If then you have not yet become acquainted with your fallen state, if you are ignorant of this essential preparative for the reception of the blessings of the Gospel, your first business is to study the holy law of God; to consider its spiritual meaning and its extensiveness; to distinguish carefully between the duties of the first and of the second table; and to see how strict is that obedience of love to God and man, which they require; and when you have done this, then examine your own hearts with impartiality, and consult experience as a faithful witness; whether you are not selfish by nature, and void of this love. By repeated self-examinations, and by perseverance in prayer, and in searching of the Scriptures, God may be pleased, in his own due time, to open your eyes, to affect your hearts, and loosen your tongues, so that at length you may both know, and, without hypocrisy, repeat in this house, "there is no health in us."

When this very important point is gained, when our proud hearts are brought to submit to the Justice of God, and even to approve the holiness and the purity of that law, which condemns us, then we are directed to look to Jesus the Saviour. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

O precious charter of felicity! Firm faith in

Jesus, this is the life of man. Do you wish for pardon? It is purchased by his blood. Do you seek for access to the Father? He is the all powerful Mediator, and brings you near to God: You are bidden to draw near with boldness, in full assurance of faith *. Are you desirous of strength that you may walk in the way of holiness? In the Lord ye have righteousness and strength †. In a word, he that believeth on him hath everlasting life; and he that comes to him shall never hunger, and he that believeth on him shall never thirst. Hear you then his delightful voice? How sweet, how precious, how refreshing to the burdened soul! "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Jesus has now in heaven the same compassionate heart which he had while here on earth; he is full of tenderness, and his love passeth knowledge: he breaketh not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax ‡.

Now, Brethren, while you meditate on these endearing characters and offices of your Saviour, do you feel no secret inclination to be better acquainted with him? Are you not almost ready with Peter to say, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee:" If it be indeed thy gracious voice, which I hear in thy word, and which thy Spirit brings to my understanding and to my heart, I am so encouraged by thy kindness, and I feel so great a desire to become thy willing and faithful disciple, that I could venture through all difficulties and dangers, and undertake things, for which, naturally, I have neither skill nor strength. What can be less suited to the nature of man, than that

* Heb. x. 19. 22. † Isaiah xlv. 24. ‡ Isaiah xlii. 3.

he should attempt to walk on the sea? Yet, if thou biddest me, if thou sayest, Come, I would meet thee, I would follow thee, I would obey thee implicitly. O let my heart hear thee speak,—and do thou draw me after thee.—If the storms should arise, and I should begin to sink, thou wilt support me, and save me in the most tempestuous seasons.

Whoever earnestly seeks the Saviour in this manner, shall assuredly hear his voice, and find his call, when he says, Come, to be quickening and powerful. He shall understand, that though by nature he is alienated from God, yet the blood of Jesus has procured reconciliation for him; and that he has permission once more to approach his Maker, and to serve him without slavish fear. He shall know not only that he has permission, but that he is invited, to do so: The precious promises of the Gospel, which were before obscure, will now become perfectly intelligible. Our blessed Lord tells us that his sheep know the voice of their Shepherd (John x.)

On these grounds all faithful ministers of the Gospel beseech lost sinners to come to Jesus, that they may obtain eternal life; and, as ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by them, they pray you in Christ's stead, Be ye reconciled to God*. Though in yourselves you are void of strength, yet believe in his power and readiness to save. Preserve this confidence unshaken, and it will draw you nearer to God: You will grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour: Your faith will grow stronger, and more truly

* 2 Cor. v. 20.

christian, that is, more pure and simple:. You will find peace of conscience; you will be enabled to conquer sin and every spiritual enemy; and you will finish your course with joy.

Every man, that sets out aright in the heavenly journey, sets out in this manner. With Peter he knows that he is no more competent to do any one thing in his own strength that might forward his own salvation, than Peter was to tread the water with safety. In his experience he feels this to be so; and he firmly depends on the Divine power of his Saviour. It does not signify how boisterous the storms of temptation are; for so long as his faith continues stable, he outrides every gale. Not only in the essential points of justification and acceptance before God, and of peace through the Lord his righteousness; but in every thing, in every part of his Christian warfare, he is to trust in the same manner, and to act on the same principles, always making the Lord ALL his strength, and always remaining fully persuaded that of himself he is utterly unable to help himself.

Good Christians, if you will thus live by faith, and thus make a conscience of trusting God with all your concerns, I tell you once more, you will prosper here in your "walk with God," and in the end you will be received into glory.

But faith is often weak and ready to fail; and then you sink, because you lose your hold on Jesus who supported you. Nevertheless, you cannot follow a better example than that of Peter: When you find yourselves in the most imminent danger, cry out earnestly, "Lord, save me." Again, and again, you will find his kind hand laying hold of you,

and delivering you from your distress. He is engaged never to forsake you; and it will not be long before he will conduct you where there shall be no more troubled waves or boisterous winds, but all shall be unclouded sunshine, and undisturbed tranquillity.

END OF VOL. I. OF SERMONS.

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